

Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru



7

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Nehru**



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Volume Seven

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FOREWORD

Jawaharlal Nehru is one of the key figures of the twentieth century. He symbolised some of the major forces which have transformed our age.

When Jawaharlal Nehru was young, history was still the privilege of the West; the rest of the world lay in deliberate darkness. The impression given was that the vast continents of Asia and Africa existed merely to sustain their masters in Europe and North America. Jawaharlal Nehru's own education in Britain could be interpreted, in a sense, as an attempt to secure for him a place within the pale. His letters of the time are evidence of his sensitivity, his interest in science and international affairs as well as of his pride in India and Asia. But his personality was veiled by his shyness and a facade of nonchalance, and perhaps, outwardly there was not much to distinguish him from the ordinary run of men. Gradually there emerged the warm and universal being who became intensely involved with the problems of the poor and the oppressed in all lands. In doing so, Jawaharlal Nehru gave articulation and leadership to millions of people in his own country and in Asia and Africa.

That imperialism was a curse which should be lifted from the brows of men, that poverty was incompatible with civilisation, that nationalism should be poised on a sense of international community and that it was not sufficient to brood on these things when action was urgent and compelling — these were the principles which inspired and gave vitality to Jawaharlal Nehru's activities in the years of India's struggle for freedom and made him not only an intense nationalist but one of the leaders of humanism.

No particular ideological doctrine could claim Jawaharlal Nehru for its own. Long days in jail were spent in reading widely. He drew much from the thought of the East and West and from the philosophies of the past and the present. Never religious in the formal sense, yet he had a deep love for the culture and tradition of his own land. Never a rigid Marxist, yet he was deeply influenced by that theory and was particularly impressed by what he saw in the Soviet Union on his first visit in 1927. However, he realised that the world was too complex, and man had too many facets, to be encompassed by any single or total explanation. He himself was a socialist with an abhorrence of regimentation and a democrat who was anxious to reconcile his faith in civil liberty with the necessity of mitigating economic and social wretchedness. His struggles,

both within himself and with the outside world, to adjust such seeming contradictions are what make his life and work significant and fascinating.

As a leader of free India, Jawaharlal Nehru recognised that his country could neither stay out of the world nor divest itself of its own interests in world affairs. But to the extent that it was possible, Jawaharlal Nehru sought to speak objectively and to be a voice of sanity in the shrill phases of the 'cold war'. Whether his influence helped on certain occasions to maintain peace is for the future historian to assess. What we do know is that for a long stretch of time he commanded an international audience reaching far beyond governments, that he spoke for ordinary, sensitive, thinking men and women around the globe and that his was a constituency which extended far beyond India.

So the story of Jawaharlal Nehru is that of a man who evolved, who grew in storm and stress till he became the representative of much that was noble in his time. It is the story of a generous and gracious human being who summed up in himself the resurgence of the 'third world' as well as the humanism which transcends dogmas and is adapted to the contemporary context. His achievement, by its very nature and setting, was much greater than that of a Prime Minister. And it is with the conviction that the life of this man is of importance not only to scholars but to all, in India and elsewhere, who are interested in the valour and compassion of the human spirit that the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund has decided to publish a series of volumes consisting of all that is significant in what Jawaharlal Nehru spoke and wrote. There is, as is to be expected in the speeches and writings of a man so engrossed in affairs and gifted with expression, much that is ephemeral; this will be omitted. The official letters and memoranda will also not find place here. But it is planned to include everything else and the whole corpus should help to remind us of the quality and endeavour of one who was not only a leader of men and a lover of mankind, but a completely integrated human being.

Indira Gandhi

New Delhi
18 January 1972

Chairman
Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund

EDITORIAL NOTE

Reaching Badenweiler in September 1935, Jawaharlal stayed in Europe for six months, watching by his wife's bedside and, when her health permitted, paying visits to England and France. Although under intense personal stress, he clarified and analysed his political and economic ideas.

After Kamala's death in February 1936, Jawaharlal returned to India to take up the presidency of the Congress and guide the party in its election campaign. The speeches and correspondence reprinted in this volume, covering the period from the Lucknow session of the Congress in April 1936 to the Faizpur session in December 1936, reveal his new ideas and emphases. Covering almost every part of India, he conducted the election campaign on an impersonal basis of principle. The Government of India Act of 1935 had to be rejected and the Congress was contesting the election in order to combat the Act effectively. Socialism was bound to come but could only follow independence. The Communal Award was unacceptable, but nationalist forces should not fritter away their energies on such a minor issue. It was more important to work for India's freedom, and this problem had to be seen in the context of the growing world crisis. The forces of imperialism and fascism were ranged against those of freedom and socialism. So the overthrow of British imperialism was important in every sense, and the Congress was the only party which could achieve this.

The election, however, did not monopolize all Jawaharlal's thought and activity. He sought the cooperation of non-Congressmen in the establishment of a Civil Liberties Union. He kept up a dialogue with those who commented on the ideas and viewpoints set forth in his *Autobiography*, which had been published in the spring of 1936.

Much of the material included in this volume has been selected from the papers of Jawaharlal Nehru. The cooperation extended by the Director and the staff of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library is acknowledged.

The Maharashtra Government, the U.P. Government, the Tamil Nadu Archives and the National Archives of India have authorized us to utilize material in their possession. *The Bombay Chronicle*, *The*

Hindustan Times, The Tribune, The Leader, The Hindu, The Statesman, Amrita Bazar Patrika, The Times of India, Aaj and Visva-Bharati Quarterly have allowed us to reprint the texts of speeches and statements first published by them. The Asia Publishing House has permitted us to reprint two letters from *A Bunch of Old Letters*. The Hogarth Press Ltd., London, has allowed us to reproduce the photograph of Jawaharlal Nehru with Leonard Woolf from Woolf's book, *Downhill all the Way*.

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GENERAL AND PERSONAL

1. En Route to Europe¹

It is dawn. We started from Jodhpur with the stars shining brightly over us and darkness spread out over the land. As we flew westward, cleaving the air, the dawn pursued us and gradually snuffed out the million stars. The land appeared, bare and cheerless, and as the sun came out, we saw spread out, far below us, large patches of cloud like snow or cotton wool. Sometimes the clouds are broken up into little bits and one can see the land below through the open spaces or as through a veil. At other times—and now as I write—they are piled up thickly and the ground is completely hidden and it is easy to imagine that we are over a vast snowfield, all shaken up by a storm. We are flying at nearly 10,000 ft. height. Above us is a clear and cloudless sky.

Many friends came to meet me at Cawnpore and Delhi. There was Ba at Delhi and Ansari and Zohra² and crowds of others. We had dinner there and left soon after. New Delhi was a blaze of illumination. We reached Jodhpur at 12.30 midnight and were taken to the state hotel nearby, a very up to date affair. A card was handed to each one of us informing us that we would be called at 3.30 a.m., *chhota hazri*, luggage to be put out at 4 a.m., departure from hotel at 4.15 a.m., plane starts at 4.30 a.m. I found it difficult to sleep for a long time, and it seemed that very soon after I had dozed off, I was called. I managed to shave, have a good hot bath—there was running hot water and an English bath—and to get ready at the scheduled time. Not so our friend Mr. Perrin. After some reminders, however, he emerged with a collar in one hand and a tie in the other. And so we were off in the starlight.

Soon we shall be flying over the Indus and then Karachi, where we change over to a larger plane. We are only three passengers in this plane—one other, an Australian I think, besides Perrin and me.

By night flying we have made up for part of the delay. From Karachi the air mail will go just a day late.

1. 5 September 1935. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.

2. Daughter of M.A. Ansari.

2. To Horace Alexander¹

Badenweiler
Sept. 17, 1935

Dear Mr. Alexander,

Thank you for your letter and your invitation. My wife's condition continues to be grave and it is difficult to say how matters will shape themselves in the future. Because of this, it is difficult for me to fix up any programme for myself. Even apart from this I feel somewhat unsettled and tired in mind and body. The change from long seclusion was sudden and unexpected, and the rapid air journey across two continents and a wholly new atmosphere require some adjustment. No doubt I shall adjust myself after a while.

Certainly I propose to visit England if my wife's health permits it and I hope to have my daughter, Indira, with me when I go there. I imagine that in any event this visit is not likely to materialise before the middle of October. How long I shall be able to stay there I do not yet know but, if it is at all possible, we would very gladly avail ourselves of your kind invitation to visit Birmingham and stay with you.

Prison life becomes intolerable without some definite occupation and variety. It is not given to everyone, I am afraid, to be able to compose poetry even under the stress of gaol and to inscribe it on the walls with the help of an improvised utensil.² But I think that most people can learn to stand on their heads. I have commended this strongly to my friends not so much for their physical health as their mental fitness. It has the virtue also, in these days of social questions, of not being confined to a select few. Almost, one might call it a proletarian diversion!

Sincerely yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Horace Alexander Papers, N.M.M.L.

2. The reference is to Lars Skrefsrud. See also *Selected Works*, Vol. 5. p. 577 for Jawaharlal's reference to him.

3. To Rabindranath Tagore¹

Badenweiler
Sept. 19, 35

My dear Gurudev,

My sudden transition from Almora jail to Germany, after a long period of seclusion and rest, has unsettled me and I find it a little difficult to adjust myself to my new environment. I suppose I shall adapt myself to it soon. I hardly stayed in Allahabad. It was one continuous rush from the moment I left Almora to my arrival in Badenweiler. The plane I came by was a slow one as aeroplanes go and did only 60 to 90 miles per hour, but in order to make up for lost time, it flew night and day. The day after we left Karachi we were in Cairo. It was difficult to realise that I had been in India the day before and in Almora jail only four days earlier.

I found Kamala very much changed for the worse. She was suffering from an acute inflammation of the pleura and was running very high temperature, going up in the evenings to 104°F. There was a slight change for the better after I came and she could take more nourishment. But on the whole there was no marked change either way. The inflammation seems to be no better and pus has to be taken out every few days by aspirations; the high temperatures continue. The acute condition has almost become semi-chronic which is strange and disturbing. It is surprising how she has been able to withstand all that she had gone through. Slightly reassuring features are her heart and pulse which are both good and one lung is wholly unaffected. It is difficult to say how matters will shape themselves. She has made a gallant fight of it and the chances are still evenly balanced.

Indira has been here. But I do not fancy her remaining too long continuously in an atmosphere of illness and anxiety. Perhaps she may go soon to a place in Switzerland. She seems to have a special aptitude for picking up languages and I want to encourage this. She is likely to remain in the Continent for the whole of next year and I am suggesting to her to devote herself chiefly to French and German during this period. After that I am vaguely thinking of her joining an Oxford college but nothing is definite. Charlie Andrews, who was here for a few hours last week, encouraged this notion.

I hope you are keeping well and I further hope that you will not have to undertake long journeys for the purpose of collecting funds for

1. Nehru File, Visvabharati, Santiniketan.

Santiniketan. It seems monstrous that you should have to shoulder this burden instead of resting and doing creative work.

I have no programme here and I can make none till Kamala's condition improves. If her health permits it, I shall visit a few friends round about and go to England for a while.

Your letter, which you sent me to Bhowali some months back, reached me and gave me great pleasure.²

With affectionate regards,

Yours,
Jawaharlal

2. Tagore in his letter of 20 April 1935 wrote, "Indira had been an asset in our place. I have watched her very closely and have felt admiration for the way you have brought her up. Her teachers all in one voice praise her and I know she is extremely popular with the students."

4. Message to the People of India¹

I was in Allahabad for such a short time and I left so suddenly that I could hardly see the host of messages that had come for me from friends and comrades all over the country. I learn now from letters and newspapers received from home that a great number of further messages of welcome and good wishes reached Allahabad after my departure. It is difficult for me to say or put in words what this outpouring of love and affection from innumerable people, friends whom I treasure and comrades who have become dearer to me than brothers in the sharing of joys and sorrows and the facing of common perils and anxieties for many years, and also those whom I have not the privilege of knowing personally, has meant to me during these past few weeks. They will forgive me for this belated acknowledgment and expression of my deep gratitude, and for not writing to them separately. All I can say is that the old bond holds and will hold whatever may befall us.

1. Badenweiler, 28 September 1935. *The Hindu*, 8 October 1935.

5. To Bharati Sarabhai¹

Badenweiler
19.10.35

My dear Bharati,

It is a little difficult for me to think of you as anything but the little girl you were, full of enthusiasm—sometimes misplaced perhaps—and so I do not find it very easy to write to you. I do not know how you have grown and what you are now; it is four years since we met, four more or less static years for me, and for you years of physical and mental and emotional growth. What has Oxford made of you? I am told you have liked Oxford and been happy there. That is as it should be. But that does not convey much, except to me a vague nostalgia, almost, shall I say, envy of youth and its glory. You were on the threshold of life in those old days, you tell me. Do you imagine that you have passed it now and tasted of life in its fullness? Linger awhile on the threshold, do not hurry.

I shall see you soon, I hope, and Suhrid. Kamala is just a little better and I intend paying a short visit to England. Indira will accompany me. We expect to reach London on the 29th October afternoon and probably we shall spend a week or so there. A day at least will be spent at Oxford. Suhrid and you would have drawn us there anyhow. Also I want to find out if it is possible and desirable for Indu to go there next year. I have been vaguely considering this possibility.

Love to Suhrid and you,

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

6. To Bharati Sarabhai¹

Badenweiler
24.10.35

My dear Bharati,

Your enthusiasm is infectious and I feel eager to enter into the spirit of the game and join you in the 'wild plans' you are hatching. How

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

I would love to! But I cannot start earlier than the 28th, and after all what does it matter? Any day can become *Diwali* and New Year's Day if we know how to make it so. But there is another ordeal which I have to face. I am told that there is—horror of horrors!—a 'Nehru Reception Committee'² in London and I am to be exhibited and carried about from place to place and generally made pretty miserable. And then I must meet and hold solemn converse with many earnest and excellent persons and hollow-eyed politicians (my own kind) and behave in a dignified and leader-like manner. The 'wild plans' seem rather far off, like so many things that we desire.

And so, little woman, I must refashion the picture of you in my mind. There will not be many changes, I fancy, and yet the nuances go a long way to change the exterior. But the picture remains a little vague and undefined though it is pleasant to contemplate. Must I also teach myself how to behave as 'heroes' are supposed to, so that I might impress your friends? That is a tiring prospect and, in any case, is not likely to be a successful attempt for I am only a bogus hero. The heroes of our childhood days stand unmasked when we grow up, and we look at them disenchanted and disillusioned.

We shall stay at Mount Royal (near Marble Arch) in London. We reach there on the 29th afternoon.

Love,

Yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. Formed on 21 October 1935 by various political organisations to welcome Jawaharlal on his arrival at London.

7. To Bharati Sarabhai¹

Badenweiler
21.11.35

Bharati dear,

While you were busy with your second chambers, I returned to a huge pile of letters which had accumulated and many parcels of books. I am greedy about books and I buy them rather extravagantly and many friends pamper me by sending them. So I sat surrounded by this pile, glad of the books and also rather envious of them and of the lore they

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

contained, for I doubted if I would have the time to read many of them. And then to the letters.

My present surroundings faded off, my recent memories, powerful as they were, grew dim, and I entered another world—a world of conflict and unhappiness and sordid manoeuvring and gallant endeavour wasted and helpless impotence and doubt and indecision and mutual recrimination—and yet, through all this misery, one could glimpse something that was worthwhile. And out of all the jumble of thoughts and emotions that rose within me I began to feel a pull and a call which ever grew stronger. It was the call of India, whatever this may be. And I wondered at this pull and how strongly it influenced me, even though spiritually I often felt a stranger in my own country.

I sent you two books. In a measure they represent me in various stages of my existence, and, as we had talked of them, I thought they might interest you. I am very far from Pater² today, though parts of me still echo to his prose. But in my youth, when I was a student like you, I liked him greatly and imagined that I found an echo of some of my moods in his writings. But that was long, long ago and that soft egotistical mood retired into the background or into the depths of the unconscious (to peep out occasionally) and gave place to something harder, sterner, something perhaps more in conformity with this hard stern life of ours. Many years after, I found an echo of my moods and inner conflicts in some of Toller's plays. Those moods and conflicts have not left me yet.

I went to London in a strange frame of mind. Purposely I made myself receptive and tried to remove the veil which covers what has been and to look back to what I had been in the old days. The charm worked to some extent, helped by others no doubt, and behind my political talks in London, Oxford and Cambridge, my mind was wandering and exploring strange and half-forgotten by-ways of my past being. The charm worked, to my own pleasant surprise, but no charm could get over the bars of my own temperament or remove the steel barriers that my contacts with life had provided me with. We are strange mixtures, are we not?, of the soft lotus bloom and the mud in which it grows, of putty and iron, of earth and sky.

You have got Sappho³ all wrong. So far as I remember the lines run thus:

1. Walter Pater (1839-1894); English essayist and critic. His famous books are *Marius the Epicurean* and *Plato and Platonism*.

3. 600 B.C.; she was one of the early Greek lyric poets.

The moon has set and the Pleiades,
It is the middle of the night and time passes
And I lie awake and alone.

Do you know Walter de la Mare's⁴ lines 'Very old are we men'?⁵
Look them up when you have the chance.

Yours,
Jawahar

4. (1873-1956); English poet and novelist. His famous works are *The Listeners*, *Memoirs of a Midget* and *On the Edge*.

5. "Very old are we men;
Our dreams are tales
Told in dim Eden
By Eve's nightingales;
We wake and whisper awhile,
But the day gone by,
Silence and sleep like fields
Of amaranth lie."

(From *All That's Past*)

8. To Vincenc Lesny¹

Badenweiler
22.11.35

Dear Professor Lesny,²

I am obliged to you for your letter³ of the 19th Nov.

I am happy to know that you have found some of my books interesting. You must remember that I am no expert at any subject and that I write as a layman who has picked up odd bits of knowledge during his journey through life. To have, therefore, the commendation of a scholar and expert like you is naturally very gratifying to me.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (1882-1953); professor at the University of Prague; visiting professor at Santiniketan, 1923 and 1927; president, Indo-Czechoslovak Society set up in June 1934.

3. In his letter of 19 November 1935, he wrote that he was "specially struck" by Jawaharlal's "comprehensive grasp of the main currents of world history" and his personal attitude towards them. He hoped that with his help the Indo-Czechoslovak Society would promote relations with India.

I hope that the contact between the Indo-Czechoslovak Society and the Indian National Congress will grow and will prove advantageous to both the countries and their peoples.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

9. To Bharati Sarabhai¹

Badenweiler
25.11.35

Bharati dear,

To write is difficult, you say, to speak equally so. How limited are words and how they hide us from ourselves. Sometimes we seek refuge in their triteness, at other times we lose ourselves in their muse, and ever the reality eludes us, pursue it how we may. And yet, do we really pursue it and seek it? Very few, I suppose, have the courage to do so, for reality includes the pit of hell as well as heaven. We avoid it in spite of our brave talk and to escape from it we build up illusions and fanciful castles in the wide expanses of our imagination. Why blame words then? It is we who do not know how to use them rightly or dare not do so.

Does a person ever understand another, or does he understand himself? Individuals meet and pass each other with eyes closed, unknowing and unknown, their drab exteriors covering a deep mystery. Sometimes there is a flash of understanding, a strange revelation, and then darkness, though it can never be quite so dark again. And sometimes, as a French poet once said, as we gaze into the eyes of our dearest and nearest we find that a stranger is looking at us.

How to bridge the gap between the dreams that fill us and the reality that is so different? How to do it? How? It seems easy when one is young and full of enthusiasm. In our pride of youth we care little for walls and obstacles. It is good that we should feel that way for a while at least during our span of life before weariness and dissolution come. It is good to cling to and lengthen that period of youth. And therefore I wrote to you some time back not to hurry, to linger awhile on the way. And when you pass on to a fuller and more complex life, carry something of the breath of youth with you, something of its idealism, but in place of its egotism try to widen your humanity. Only

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

then can we endeavour to bridge that gap. At best that bridge is a ramshackle affair, liable to collapse at the first touch of storm and tempest. But the effort is always worthwhile; it brings its own reward. And there seems no other way.

It was good for me to see your bright young face and to sense your enthusiasms. Some of the weariness and the fret, that is our common lot, left me for a while and I kept company again with thoughts of long ago. My mind was filled with ideas, old and new, a strange medley, and I wondered what I was and what you were and what you were going to be.

Where am I going for the Christmas vacation? I have no such vacations. Sundays and week days, term-time and vacation are all alike to me. I suppose I shall remain here in Badenweiler, unless, it is a very remote chance, I take Kamala to Switzerland before Christmas. In the latter event I shall be with her probably round about Lausanne. There was at one time just a chance of my going to Prague then but I doubt it. I would of course love to see you—need I say it? But you should go to the Engadine or to the Tyrol and take your fill of snow and ice and joy there, and ski, and luge, and skate, and indulge in the hundred other delights of a winter in the mountains.

Yours,
Jawahar

10. To Indira Nehru¹

Badenweiler
27.11.35

Darling Indu,

Your letters of various dates came this evening.

I can quite understand your feeling about the time-table. School time-tables are apt to irritate as one grows up and especially when one has special work to do. Still they have their uses and when one lives in any establishment a disciplined life in harmony with the other residents is helpful and desirable. Otherwise one becomes an odd number not fitting in with the others. This does not produce much peace of mind. The real difficulty is that you are both educationally and physically in a transition stage—between school and university.

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

You are just beyond school and not quite of the university standard. You could of course have gone to a university straight off but you would have felt somewhat out of it for a while. It is far better to go there when you can take a leading part in the intellectual and social life there. That time will come soon enough—nine or ten months will go rapidly enough. Meanwhile I think it would be a good thing if you tried to fit in with the routine of La Pelouse in so far as you can do so conveniently.

This of course does not mean that you must do everything that the other girls or boys do. Anything that does not fit in, you can avoid. Usually, I imagine, it will be pleasant for you to go for the communal walks. Is it not better to go in a group than alone? When you do not feel like it, you need not go. As I have often said, a very desirable habit to cultivate is the habit of cooperation, and culture is partly the capacity to fit in with any new environment. If we are too individualistic we do not develop the social and communal virtues.

But the point is that you should decide for yourself what you can do and what you cannot without interfering with more important work. This applies to the subjects you have taken up. I am sure that Mlle. Hemmerlin will help you in re-arranging your time-table in order to make it most profitable to you. After a few days you will know better how to readjust this time-table and you can then speak to Mlle. H.

Of course if you want me to I shall write to Mlle. H. But it would be so much better if you had a talk with her and pointed out your difficulties. Obviously your main preoccupation should be preparation for Responsions and languages. Music and painting are very desirable in themselves and add to our joy of life. Whether you can carry on with them or not it is for you to decide. Perhaps you can stick to one.

Anyway it will be a good thing if you had a little free time for reading etc. For the rest a strict time-table is really very necessary to get work done regularly and efficiently. Otherwise one drifts. One of my virtues (so I think!) is that I work to a time-table.

Mummie is much the same though her temperature was slightly higher today—not much but still I don't fancy it.

Madan Bhai has gone to Paris today and I suppose he is there by this time.

I enclose a letter for Lou Geissler—or rather two letters, one from me and one from another person. Will you please send them to her? Tell her that she can either reply to me direct or through you, as she prefers.

I have heard from Eva about the typewriter. I expect to get the machine soon.

Do not forget to let me know what bank you have finally selected. You will then have to write to India.

Today I had a visit from Raja Rao,² a young south Indian, who lives near Paris and has married a French girl. He came alone from Mulhouse across the Rhine where he is spending some days. I liked him. I am thinking of going over to Mulhouse one afternoon for a few hours as I am told that it is a very enterprising municipality and has got all manner of socialistic and communal schemes working. Probably I shall go on Saturday next.

If you want any more books for your course you will let me know. We have been having delightful weather here—cold and dry and sunny. This evening there was a little snow but it turned to sleet.

Love,

Your loving
Papu

2. (b. 1909); author of *Kanthapura* and *The Serpent and the Rope*.

11. To Amiya Chakravarty¹

Badenweiler
29.11.35

My dear Chakravarty,

... My wife continues to have ups and downs. It is hardly correct to call these setbacks relapses. As the liquid or pus accumulates in the pleura she has a high temperature. Then this is taken out by aspiration and immediately the temperature goes down and is almost normal for 10 or 12 days. Then again the liquid accumulates and the temperature goes up. Gradually however the normal period is increasing and this indicates that the inner inflammation is slowly subsiding. Probably this swing will go on for some time. Since I wrote to you she was keeping well but again yesterday and today her temperature shot up. Apart from this, however, she is tolerably well and looks better than the temperature would indicate.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

It is gratifying to know that I have "profoundly impressed" anybody² but then I almost suspect your affection and personal feelings for me colour your views! The question you or they put to me, however, is not very complimentary to me as a socialist. Have I any use for English socialists? Most certainly I have, realising of course that individuals cannot, as a rule, move governments or work wonders unless circumstances help them. In many ways I have far more in common with English and other non-Indian socialists than I have with non-socialists in India. I am quite convinced that any real solution of our Indian problems is vitally connected with the world solution of present-day problems. It has become difficult for me to think of India apart from the world. That, I take it, is the socialist attitude and I hope I can lay claim to be a socialist in thought and ideology. For a socialist to keep aloof from other socialists on grounds of nationality is hardly consistent with the fundamentals of his belief. Even apart from socialism I feel drawn towards international contacts, cultural and otherwise, and I do think that these help greatly in bringing worthwhile people nearer to each other. The real difficulty in the past has been the ingrained suspicion in our minds that most English socialists are not really socialists where India is concerned. The old tradition and kink of imperialism comes in the way, as well as the difficulty of understanding the curious complex that is India. The British Labour Party is mainly responsible for this suspicion in our minds. But I am quite sure that there are individual English socialists, and they are a growing number, who have got over this imperialist complex and who can think of India on real socialist lines. They may not be many so far but it is a comfort to know that they are there.

What claims can we make on them? It is hardly for us to tell them, although the claims are there right enough, and both as sensitive human beings and socialists they must be aware of them. Action, in speech or writing or otherwise, must necessarily be decided by them. They know the environment better than we do and if they are really interested they will find ways and means. It is not good enough to feel that the whole Indian problem is too complex and delicate for them to touch, or to be irritated with Indians as a group or with individuals and make this an excuse for inaction. Nor is it sufficient to say that they are afraid of rubbing some of us the wrong way and

2. In his letter of 26 November 1935, Amiya Chakravarty wrote that those who had come into contact with Jawaharlal's ideas were "profoundly impressed" and were trying to find out whether they could "individually or in small groups do something—purely as friends, as fellow-thinkers and human individuals... to help us at the other end", and if so, they wanted to hear from him on this.

therefore they prefer to be silent. It is true we are sensitive, especially when Englishmen begin to preach to us, but we can distinguish between sincerity and hypocrisy, and anything that proceeds from sincere socialist belief will always be welcome. But for one thing, our patience, or at least mine, is exhausted. That is the pious attitude of doing good to us, the motive of the well-meaning society lady who goes slumming. Nor do I think that mere courtesy and good manners and smiling at each other will carry us any distance, desirable as they are in all social intercourse. Vital political and economic problems and conflicts, like mathematical problems, do not get solved by good humour and smiles alone.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

12. To Indira Nehru¹

Badenweiler
3/4.12.35

Darling,

I have not written to you for some days. Indeed I have not written to anybody. I have created quite a record by not going to the post-office for five days. I have been working very hard. A great deal of my time has been spent with mummie who has not been well at all and as Madan Bhai also is not here I have to spend practically the whole day with her. Yesterday I did not even come back for lunch. Today I went back after a hurried dinner and returned at 9.30. The aspiration took place this evening. I hope she will be better tomorrow. Her temperature has been keeping up and she has had several sleepless nights.

The rest of my time has been given, almost every minute of it till late at night, to revising my manuscript of *In & Out*. This has become a terrible job. I have got through over half of it and I hope to finish it in another week. Meanwhile letters and other work are accumulating. I feel rather tired and am already looking forward to a brief holiday at Christmas time when you will be here. In between I propose to go to Paris for a week if mummie's health permits.

Frau Ehrhardt gave me quite a lecture two days ago. She told me that I was not eating enough or sleeping enough and was developing

1. Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

nerves as a result of over-work. She said she had observed that I shook my head unconsciously during meals!

On Sunday I went to Mulhouse or Mulhausen. It was the very worst day I could have chosen. It rained hard continuously and the wind blew as if it wanted to blow us off. When I reached there I found that my host Dr. Dumesnil had developed influenza. Still I was glad I went and I saw a very interesting municipal school for poor and weak children. Madame Dumesnil asked me about you and when I mentioned Bex, immediately she asked if you were with Mlle. H. She praised H. greatly and said that I had chosen excellently and could not have done better. She has never met Mlle. H. but they correspond with each other.

Mummie wants me to remind you to send some present to the girl in Paris who frequently sends you gifts.

You can throw away *The Statesman* and *Manchester Guardian* and *Times* after you have finished with them.

Hari is standing for election to the Allahabad Municipality on behalf of the Congress! The local lawyers etc. are furious.

Love from

Your loving
Papu

13. To V.K. Krishna Menon¹

Badenweiler
Dec. 9, 1935

My dear Menon,²

I sent you this morning the remaining part of *In and Out of Prison*. This completes the work. I have hurriedly read through the manuscript and made a number of changes.

... I would like the book to appear as early as possible. It has a certain political significance for India at present, but later on it may be a little stale, from this point of view at least...

The feeling has been growing upon me that I must go to India for the Congress—this is quite apart from the question of the presidentship.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.
2. (1896-1974); secretary of the India League in London, 1929-47; borough councillor of St. Pancras, 1934-47; high commissioner for India in England, 1947-52; Indian delegate, United Nations General Assembly, 1952-62; Minister without portfolio, 1956-57; Minister for Defence, 1957-62.

I would, from many points of view, prefer not being president. However, I propose to do nothing in the matter and to await the course of events. But I must attend the next Congress session, and it is desirable that I reach India about a fortnight before the session begins. This means that I must sail from Europe—I cannot afford another air journey—about the 10th of February. This means that I cannot go to England in February as I would like to spend my last days in Europe with my wife. It is not very easy for me to leave her in her present condition, but to remain here indefinitely is still more difficult. I would prefer to go to India and return after some months, if that was necessary.

At the latest therefore I can visit England in the last week of January, and for not much more than a week. During such a short visit, I doubt if it will be desirable to have any public functions, workers' meetings etc., which you suggested. Besides they do not seem to fit in with the role I imagine I am playing just at present. I realise the importance of what you told me and, under different circumstances, I would gladly indulge in this kind of activity. But pure propaganda does not seem to me to be indicated from now.

Drop the Pandit if you value my good opinion!

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

14. To Goshiben Captain¹

Badenweiler
28-12-35

My dear Psyche,

A guilty conscience is not a pleasant companion. And in writing to you I feel a little ashamed—shameless as I otherwise am. For some two weeks past two letters of yours have lain with me and I have often thought of them and of you. I was happy to get them, though it is no easy matter always to decipher what you have written and the Nepalese paper of your choice is not helpful in this task. But one wants leisure and some peace of mind to write decent letters and I have lacked both these. I thought also that you would be getting news of Kamala from my letters and cables to Jal and others. I am surprised to find how much I have to do here. Kamala is of course the first concern and I spend most of the day with her, and sometimes,

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

lately, part of the night. In odd hours that I scrape together I deal with other work including a terrifying correspondence.

The other work has also included my new book which I wrote in prison last time. The task of authorship is like blood to the tiger and I am beginning to think of myself sometimes as a writer. Have I not joined the P.E.N. club?² As you know, one has to give one's profession all over the place—in every hotel, pension etc. I am hard put as to how to describe myself. Subhas Bose, I found, had taken to describing himself as a writer. Being more modest, I could not quite bring myself to do that. But what am I? In a recent application for a passport, I decided to call my profession 'public affairs', whatever that might mean. I suppose the term is wide enough to cover a multitude of activities, good and evil. And yet, in spite of public exhibitions and the like, I have never ceased to feel a singularly private person.

One of my recent trials has been an attempt to come to terms with a publisher in London. I realised for the first time the difference in the mentality and outlook of a publisher and an author and how the two clash. I would of course have been worsted in the duel, but the idea that I might be exploited by the publisher irritated me. I saw no reason why the publisher should profit handsomely by my efforts and I should remain in the outer darkness. Not being a satyagrahi pledged to living on Rs. 12/- a month, I decided to get the best terms I could get. But all this business was so utterly distasteful to me that I almost felt like hurling the manuscript into the fire. As an alternative I changed the publisher³ and accepted a much better offer. So to some extent I have peace now on this point.

What shall I write to you about Kamala? You must have learnt of the recent crisis through which she passed. It was pretty bad and the wonder is that she survived it. This evening as I looked at her and found her quite bright and cheerful, the last week with its horrors seemed almost like a bad dream. Was it the same Kamala who was on the brink of life only a few days ago? Her face changes remarkably from day to day and deludes us into imagining many things which have little foundation. And so my reactions change; if you could see the letters I have written during the last week and compare them, you will be astonished at my changing moods. I am not exactly mercurial.

2. International association of poets, playwrights, editors, essayists and novelists.

3. Jawaharlal's *Autobiography* was published by John Lane, and not by Stanley Unwin, with whom he had been negotiating earlier.

I have always considered myself pretty stolid and in a crisis I usually hold together. But the relaxation of a strain brings curious reactions.

Kamala has got over this last crisis and she has reverted to the *status quo ante* crisis. But this is bad enough and she is so terribly weak. One finds it hard to hope and yet I must say that I am not hopeless. Both Kamala and I have a hard core which carries on and it is difficult for us to admit or imagine defeat. I cannot describe her present condition—it is much too complex for description and there are so many factors, psychological and immaterial, which elude analysis. Even one expert doctor's report cannot deal with them. And so when I have to cable I find it extraordinarily difficult to say the right thing in a few words. Jal has developed a habit of putting me in this difficulty—as I sat down to write to you a fresh cable came from him.

And so all I can say is that Kamala is in no immediate danger, and she is far better than we could have dared to hope a week ago. But the disease has got strong hold of her and her weakness is so great that recovery at best seems to be a distant affair. Meanwhile danger always hovers.

I was greatly interested in your psychic effort—you must of course justify your name. Indu had told me of it earlier. I suppose it was not quite so extraordinary after all for everyone was expecting my arrest and your subconscious mind must have been full of the idea. You see I am reluctant to plunge into the unknown.

I was fully conscious of November 14. I try in vain to forget it as it comes round year by year, painfully reminding me of a fact I would fain forget उम्र का तकाजा⁴ as we say in the north.

Thank you for the snap you sent. It is not very good but it is precious and I have carried it about, in my pocket-book.

Indu has gone back to her old school in Switzerland—at Bex. She will remain there for a year, chiefly doing languages and, I hope, getting physically stronger. After that she ought to go to a university. I am not yet sure where she will go. The choice in Europe is singularly limited at present. Most European countries have to be ruled out—Germany, Italy etc. We are left with Switzerland, France and England. Switzerland, though good for the school stage, does not appeal to me for university work. It is such a tight and narrow-minded place—the typical bourgeois. So we fall back on France and England—meaning thereby Paris and Oxford. I should like her to spend some time at both these places.

4. Natural effect of age.

I am afraid there is no chance whatever of my going to Poland. It is entirely outside my ken. England I shall go to again and, if I can manage it, I shall try to find out your friend of Sunningdale Gardens—I can't quite make out her name as you have written it. But I want to give you a faint idea of how I am likely to function during my stay in London. On the last occasion I was rushed about all day till I was almost in a daze. I am now told that my last visit was not properly organized and I managed to waste several minutes and seconds between engagements. This must be avoided on the next occasion.

In a sense I liked my visit to Paris better. There was not so much of a rush, though I had little leisure. I met a different type of person there—authors, journalists and the like, mostly left-wing people, like Andre Gide,⁵ Malraux⁶ etc. I like the French intellectual type.

I love the line you quoted—'And the old ocean in an unquiet slumber lay'. I sometimes feel like envying the old ocean. Slumber, even though unquiet, is very welcome at times.

Madan Atal is flourishing—torn between his desire to reduce himself and his love for good and plentiful food, especially whipped cream. It is a Homeric conflict. Hitler has partly intervened in it by some new regulations rationing cream. Anyway it is not to be obtained easily here now. Even eggs are becoming rare!

Love,

Yours,
Jawahar

5. (1869-1951); French novelist who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1947; among his best known works are *Strait is the Gate* and *La Symphonie Pastorale*.
6. (b. 1901); French novelist and critic; among his best known works are *La Condition Humaine* and *The Voices of Silence*; member of de Gaulle's cabinet; received the Nehru Award for International Understanding in 1972.

15. To Madan Atal¹

Badenweiler
5.1.36

My dear Madan,
Kamala's temperature has kept high as usual and she had shivering fits. Otherwise she is much the same. She was very depressed this morning and talked to me, off and on, several times. She told me

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

again and again that she had long been convinced that she could never get well here. She had said so, so many times and asked us to take her away. Pitcously she begged me to take her away to Switzerland. She pointed to her body, how wasted it was and told me not to be misled by her face. She was in her last stages. What could I say to her?

It was very distressing to hear her and my mind has been troubled since. It has been troubled with the thought that we have been unable to grant an overpowering wish of hers, which she has repeated so often. Whether she lives or not I do not know. The chances of her recovering are remote. But the thought that we could not fulfil such a deeply felt wish of hers oppresses me.

Her condition is of course very grave and as far as I can see, very little can be done for her. I am certain that any major operation will be the death of her and I have no faith left in doctors with big names and reputation. Even for an operation she must have more vitality than she possesses now. It seems to me that one of the most important factors is the psychological factor and this is more important now than before for she is losing the will to live. This factor and careful nursing with competent medical attendance is about all we can trust to pull her gradually up. It is just possible that the psychological factor might be strengthened greatly if she could be taken to Switzerland. Switzerland is a magic name for her and the mere change will put new life in her. But whether it is at all possible to shift her now is more than I can say. It seems a tremendously risky undertaking. However I should like you to discuss this matter also with Unverricht.

About nurses you might enquire in Berlin, but I feel it is dangerous to take the risk of bringing new nurses who are not used to her and to whom they might not take kindly. Unless I am absolutely sure that the change will be for her good I would not support it. Apart from Anna, the only other tried person is Annette. A totally new nurse will always be a risk.

The new nurse has sent a bill charging at the rate of Rs. 9 a day!

Yours affly.,
Jawahar

16. To Horace Alexander¹Badenweiler
17.1.36

Dear Alexander,

I wish you would yield to your temptations. It is far the easiest way of getting rid of them. Anyway I dislike formality and we have known each other long enough to do without it.

My wife is far from well but I have decided to go to London on the 25th—reaching there on the 26th. I have left the programme in Menon's hands—he can consult others—as it is impossible to fix up anything from this distance. I would gladly meet the Cambridge economists but I must confess that the prospect of talking economics with this very learned crowd rather terrifies me. As for Sir George Schuster, I met him once in India and, if it can be easily arranged, I would have no objection to seeing him in London—but not to discuss Indian finance. I hardly know anything of the details of this and a discussion would not be profitable.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Horace Alexander Papers, N.M.M.L.

17. To Mother¹Badenweiler
20.1.36

Dear Mother,

When I last wrote to you, Kamala's condition had deteriorated badly. Since then she has improved slightly. Not much, but still she is better than before. Now for some time there has been no change in her condition. The temperature shoots up and she has become very weak. It is a good thing that she eats well, without a fuss. But her condition remains critical. We have now decided to take her from here to Switzerland in a few days. It is not far from here but travelling is not easy in her weak condition.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Original in Hindi.

I am going to London for two or three days. On my return I will stay with Kamala for two or three weeks and then return to India. I shall probably come by air. So, I shall soon be meeting you.

Nan gave me the details of the Congress Jubilee.² It was a good show.

Indu is in school. Vidya³ returned to London.

Love,

Your son,
Jawahar

2. The Golden Jubilee of the Indian National Congress was celebrated on 28 December 1935.
3. Daughter of Kishanlal Nehru, a cousin of Jawaharlal.

18. To Rajendra Prasad¹

Badenweiler
23.1.36

My dear Rajendra Babu,

Many thanks for your two cables and letter. The second cable came this afternoon. I am very glad to learn that the Congress dates have been fixed from April 7th to 14th. This gives me ample time and I hope I shall now be able to get to India well ahead of the Congress session. I was under the impression that under the constitution the Congress must be held in February or March. I suppose the Working Committee has stretched the constitution a little. I am personally glad it has, for it suits me. But I imagine that it will be rather warm in Lucknow then—though it will not be uncomfortably so. Perhaps a reason for your extending the dates was Bapu's ill health. Let us hope that he will soon be well. Also, I imagine that the Assembly members wanted to avoid a clash with their Assembly meetings.

As I cabled to you, I live in a state of uncertainty owing to Kamala's varying condition. After passing through the severe crisis of last month she has been in a peculiar state. There is no immediate crisis but there is a kind of continuing semi-crisis and certain complications appear to have set in, due largely to extreme weakness. Her heart is not as good as it was. This present state cannot continue for long. It will either grow worse or better, within the next three or four

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-43(KW)(i)/1935, p. 21, N.M.M.L.

weeks at most. I mean a fairly definite change either way, for minor changes are constantly occurring. Latterly she has been slightly better. During this fairly critical period I should like to be with her or at least near her. The new Congress dates give me that chance and I am grateful to you.

We have decided to shift Kamala to Lausanne in Switzerland. She will probably be removed in about a week's time. The change, I hope, will do her good.

It is difficult to leave Kamala just at present but I have decided to adhere to my London programme. I am leaving for London day after tomorrow and may stay there ten days if I am not suddenly called back earlier. It is a very heavy and complicated programme and I am supposed to meet a variety of persons—politicians, writers, critics, economists etc.—mostly English people. I think these contacts are useful and I find these personally stimulating. Unfortunately, the organisations interested in India in London, find it difficult to cooperate with each other and they suspect each other of stealing a march over the other. I have tried my best not to associate myself with one to the exclusion of another but I have not wholly succeeded in removing suspicion and ill will. It is extraordinary how people make mountains out of molehills.

I cannot say definitely when I shall be back in India but I shall certainly try to get there a clear month before the Congress.

As we are leaving Badenweiler our address will be changed. I cannot give you a definite address yet. For the time being the best address will be c/o Thomas Cook & Son, Rue du Mont Blanc, Geneva.

Congratulations on the splendid success of the Congress Jubilee.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

19. To Horace Alexander¹

Lausanne
27.2.36

Dear Alexander,

I have your letter. My plans have been suddenly upset by a sad turn for the worse which my wife has taken.² I have postponed my departure

1. Horace Alexander Papers, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

2. Kamala Nehru died on 28 February 1936.

to India by 11 days. So for the present I am here but my mind is not functioning very clearly....

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

20. To Amiya Chakravarty¹

Montreux
4.3.36

My dear Chakravarty,

Your card has reached me here, where I have been for the last two days. Day after tomorrow I leave for India via Marseilles (by air).²

I have made it as clear as I could that I want no interviews in Rome. But the Duce is evidently interested in me. Yesterday the Italian Consul at Lausanne travelled up here to give me Signor Mussolini's personal message of sympathy and condolence.³

Indira will appear for Responsions next June and presumably for the Somerville entrance next March. It is a little difficult for me to be positive and definite as I live an unsettled life. The only thing that was worrying me was the extra year that Indira would have to spend. If that is unavoidable then it has to be faced. With all my attractions for Oxford I am not frightfully keen on it; there is just an element of ineffectiveness in it.

Why does the principal of Somerville try to find out about my plans through others? A direct approach might be more satisfactory. I have yet to receive any acknowledgement in writing from Somerville of the letters I wrote in November last. I dislike writing to people who do not answer and I propose to write no further letters to the Somerville people, unless I am provoked. Indira will communicate with them when she goes for Responsions in June.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Jawaharlal left Marseilles on 7 March and arrived at Karachi on 10 March 1936.

3. Jawaharlal refers to his refusal to meet Mussolini in *The Discovery of India*: "Normally I might have got over my distaste for meeting him, for I was curious also to know what kind of man the Duce was. But the Abyssinian campaign was being carried on then and my meeting him...was bound to be used for fascist propaganda."

21. To Agatha Harrison¹

Badenweiler
Sept. 25th, 1935

Dear Agatha Harrison,

Thank you for your letter. Certainly, we might do without prefixes and the like. I have no liking for them and I have a peculiar dislike to "Pandit". It sounds so pompous and I hope that whatever my other demerits might be I am not pompous.

C.F. Andrews is still presumably somewhere in Switzerland, terribly busy of course, as he always is. His amazing industry astonishes me. He sent me a few lines to say that he might turn up here on Tuesday or Wednesday. Today is Wednesday and I have had no further news of him.

Kamala is much the same. Yesterday there was another aspiration followed by a fairly thorough cleaning out and some disinfecting stuff was put in. The job was a painful one but on the whole the patient bore it well and her temperature came down immediately. She feels exhausted today. I am inclined to think—perhaps it is my imagination—that she is just slightly better since I came. But one cannot count on this much and the way her temperature shoots up to extraordinary heights frightens me. It went up as high as 105.8°F. the other day when the evening before it was under 98°F. She is taking her nourishment much better. I am spending more time with her now as she expressed a wish that I should do so. My presence is a help in her taking food.

Do not trouble to send me any cuttings from Indian papers. I get *The Bombay Chronicle* and *The Hindustan Times* as well as some of the weeklies.

Your suggestion that I should "talk with some of the people with special responsibility for India" during my visit to England has set me thinking. It was almost a new idea for me and so far I had not thought of it as a possibility. I shall discuss the matter with C.F.A.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

when he comes here. But I think I should let you know my first reactions to the proposals and I know you will not mind if I am perfectly frank.

I was and am looking forward to my visit to England as an entirely private affair with nothing in the nature of public engagements. I do not yet feel in the mood for any public function and I have so far not succeeded in getting rid of what might be called the gaol atmosphere. I have absolutely no feeling about taking unfair advantage of my early release so far as the government is concerned. I made it perfectly clear to the government before my discharge that I would consider myself perfectly free to indulge in any activity in Europe or elsewhere. The clause about leaving some matters to my honour which they added referred to the few days which might have elapsed before I left India.² These days were ultimately reduced to a few hours only as I left the very day of my arrival in Allahabad. Anyway that is over and I have no questions of honour or good form to face now. But though there are no external inhibitions, I feel reluctant to come out of my shell. Partly, it is a question of mood and I may change that mood later on. More important still is the feeling that I must take no definite step without knowing much more fully than I do now the position in India in regard to particular individuals and groups, and without consulting my colleagues there. You must remember that during the last four eventful years I have been mostly in prison and no one in prison can ever be in real touch with developments outside. The personal touch and the psychological link are absent. One lives in a world apart, viewing external happenings as through a glass, darkly, with phantom and almost unreal figures moving hither and thither. But even these phantom movements produce emotional reactions which are stronger than they might otherwise be, as the outlet of action is denied.

I want of course to meet as many friends in England as possible and to get into personal touch with many whom I have desired to meet for long. I am also prepared for frank talks about Indian affairs. It is not the subject that I wish in any way to avoid. How can I do so when I am wrapped up in it? Nor am I usually afraid of any kind of publicity; I am too accustomed to moving about in crowds, except in my periods of seclusion. But the light does dazzle one, after a long darkness.

All this however has only an indirect bearing on the proposal you have made. That proposal affects me in a different way. I think it

2. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 418.

is always good to meet people on the other side. Personal contacts do not remove difficulties or solve hard problems but they do help in bringing a certain very desirable human element in an otherwise impersonal and inhuman atmosphere. So ordinarily I would welcome such contacts. But just at present my mind rebels against any such step and it is very difficult for me to explain just why this is so. You tell me that talks can be arranged naturally and without publicity. I do not quite understand who the other parties are likely to be. I can only vaguely guess, and though I would naturally prefer an absence of publicity, I doubt if this is feasible. Anyway if publicity somehow was given to what happened, I would not care very much. But what would I say and how could I presume to represent anybody? Am I to discuss the new Act that has been passed?³ It occupies a very small corner of my mind, which is troubled and distressed by a host of other happenings. How can I tell you or anyone else what my mind has gone through during the last few years? I do not consciously think that I have any grievance against particular individuals, but I do find a certain hard core inside me against the system that functions in India. I suppose most of us have been hardened during these last few years and the iron has entered our souls. We may not bark as we used to do and as Sir Samuel Hoare so chastely put it, but silent dogs have also their feelings.⁴ We expected oppression and cruelty and we got our full measure of them, but it is harder to bear them when they are accompanied by ostentatious vulgarity and a sickening hypocrisy. It is this atmosphere that has strangled and suffocated us and made it almost impossible for us to consider anything but the hands at our throats and the foul air we have to breathe. Insult and injury have been heaped on those we love and cherish while everything that is evil and bad in India has been encouraged and fostered. The very thought of the lap-dog breed in India makes me feel almost physically sick and it is this breed that is made to flourish under the present dispensation. I am afraid I am very far from being a true satyagrahi and I am neither humble nor

3. The Government of India Act of 1935 retained the subordination of the government of India to the British Parliament, through the Secretary of State, to whom the Viceroy was responsible. It provided for a federation of British India and princely states, a dyarchical executive at the Centre and provincial autonomy.

4. Sir Samuel Hoare, in a broadcast on 28 January 1932, had claimed that Congress threats did not worry the government: "though dogs bark, the caravan passes on."

devoid of pride. There are things I cannot tolerate whatever the consequences and many of these have happened and are happening in India.

My father once said that the British Government in India was the greatest terrorist organisation in the country. How many people outside, who talk so glibly of terrorism in Bengal, realise this, I wonder. I hate terrorism in all its forms but to me the most monstrous thing is a powerful and organised government trying to crush the spirit of a nation and to break its finest children in an endeavour to protect its own vested interests as well as those of its reactionary hangers-on. That is a crime against human dignity which no nation which has a spark of life in it can tolerate.

The Indian newspapers give little enough expression to the real feeling of India. They dare not. But even they give some occasional glimpses. Are we to discuss "reforms" when the Viceroy certifies the new bill⁵ continuing all the extraordinary and emergency powers of the government and the magistrates and the police? There was a huge outcry in England when a very feeble (judged by Indian standards) seditious bill was proposed early this year.⁶ Where are those lovers of liberty when India has to face something far more terrible and which we know from past experience will be ruthlessly worked? The *Manchester Guardian* and its like work themselves into a rage over Germany or Austria, but they try to be amusing and cynical when India comes into their ken. A sense of humour is always worth cultivating but it is difficult to be amused when one is sat upon and badgered and crushed. Many of our friends in England, who sincerely feel for us, put in a good word for us occasionally. But they often remind me of the lady who, out of the goodness of her heart, goes slumming and doles out charity to individuals. Sometimes that charity hurts more than it heals and, in any event, it is a singularly ineffective way of dealing with the problem.

I can't get rid of the idea that there is no real appreciation of the problem even among most of our friends. Their occasional writings astonish me for they deal with side issues and superficialities and ignore

5. The Criminal Law Amendment Bill sought to give permanent effect to the Act of 1932 which was to be in force for three years and had provided for measures against picketing and unlawful associations. The Bill was rejected twice by the Legislative Assembly, but was passed by the Council of State. The assent of the Viceroy was announced on 17 October 1935.

6. The Incitement to Disaffection Bill of 1934 providing for the "prevention and punishment of endeavours to seduce His Majesty's forces from their duty or allegiance" was opposed by about four million organised workers.

the real thing. Is it possible to bridge this gulf? I wonder. Can there not be at least mutual comprehension even though there may not be agreement or any effective action? Are we in India blinded by our nationalism, or whatever it is, or are the English people so full of the imperialistic spirit as not to be able to view their dependencies in proper perspective? I do not know.

What can I say to anybody in authority? I represent nobody and I am completely out of touch with recent happenings. Yet, strangely enough, I am still the General Secretary of the Congress. The only person who represents India more than anyone has done or can do is Gandhi. I may differ from him in a multitude of things but that is a matter between him and me and our colleagues. So far as I am concerned he is India in a peculiar measure and he is the undoubted leader of my country. If anybody wants to know what India wants, let him go to Gandhi. But the British Government has tried deliberately to insult him and ignore him. That does not matter to him or to India greatly, though many will not forget the treatment accorded to their beloved leader. For the insult seemed to them to be directed to India herself. But if Gandhi is to be ignored and insulted where do we come in? Are we to raise ourselves by stepping over his body? Many will prefer the earth with him to the height without him. They have their own conception of loyalty.

I do not know what Gandhi or the Congress will do in India, nor have I any clear idea yet of what I am likely to do on my return. It may be that I may differ from him in thought and activity. But if anyone wants to know what nationalist India stands for, as a Congressman, I can only refer him to Gandhi.

Probably most of us suffer from a number of complexes, national and individual. That was inevitable in a subject country and the abnormal period we have passed through has added to the number and their intensity. The cure is likely to take time. It has not begun yet.

Meanwhile it is comforting to know that the Viceroy after certifying the Criminal Law Amendment Act, and doing a few other odd jobs to put us in our places, and bombing, or rather having bombed, a few score villages on the north-west frontier, will proceed to Calcutta to take part in a magnificent period costume ball which he is giving. Great preparations have been made for this for months past. Curiously enough, the period chosen is pre-revolutionary France of the 18th century. The Viceroy is going to represent Louis XVI and Lady Willington, Marie Antoinette.

The writing of this letter was interrupted as I had to go to the sanatorium. I found that my wife's temperature had gone up again.

She was slightly delirious. Later in the evening she was somewhat better. I asked the doctor if it will be possible for me to go to England a month later. He could not give a definite answer. Perhaps, he said.

This letter has become longer than I intended and I have written about matters I do not usually write about. I hope you will not mind.

Sincerely yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

22. Reply to the Address of Welcome at London¹

I cannot find words, not because I am unused to facing large audiences or public speaking, but because something has happened during my long "seclusion".

Some strange change takes place when one is remote from all colleagues and most human contacts during long seclusion in prison. It is something psychological and it leaves a man like myself with the feeling that words have little or no meaning and thoughts become much more important. Even if I wished to speak about the situation in India I could hardly do so because, as you know, I came away so hurriedly. For long months I had been shut off from the world and even before then—you know my record—it seemed to me that I was very rarely in contact with my closest colleagues in India. You will understand that, when I say that normally we had to travel long distances to meet, and again it was our common experience that when one was "out" the other was "in". When I came from my seclusion I felt that much had happened but it was not easy to find out exactly what had occurred. It was my intention when coming to England merely to renew old acquaintances and visit scenes of which I had the fondest recollection, and I did not expect to attend anything in the nature of a public gathering. It would, however, have seemed churlish to have refused the hospitality offered to me today and you are all extremely kind to receive me.

1. Speech at the Stewart Restaurant, Piccadilly, London, 31 October 1935. From *The Hindu*, 11 November 1935.

I do not agree with references to the sacrifices I have made, because I have found myself with a job to do, and when one does the job one wants, there is no sacrifice in doing it. I think of the vast numbers of our people in India, who get no garlands, receptions or mention in newspapers. They serve. They have made the sacrifices and they continue to do so. When I think of the burden that these millions of Indians carry then I begin to feel myself quite humble, and here in London, this great city of immense wealth, something happens to me. The magnificent buildings and all the signs of civilisation disappear and I see in their place the millions of little mud huts back in the motherland. Then I look around the world as it is today and notice the concern of people for what is happening here and there and it seems to me that the only way one can get things in true perspective is to stand on one's head. When I think of what is happening here in England today I think of Buddha who once said that the tears that have been shed in the world would fill up all the waters. Some of us have had a strenuous and arduous time in our country, but in other countries also people find it hard, and though it may be difficult not to be bitter, I can assure you there is no bitterness in me, certainly not towards individuals. What bitterness there is in my heart, or in those of my colleagues, is never directed against the human individual but always against systems and machines.

The real job of India lies there, in our country. It is our job and it is absurd to expect others to undertake it. We have to look at our job from our own point of view, but that it is our job does not prevent us from gaining tremendous consolation when we find in England and elsewhere so large a number of people who take their stand for what we consider a righteous cause.

23. On Service to India¹

I am talking to you in Hindustani as when we meet our brothers we talk in our own language. This does not mean that I dislike the use of the English language, which is a good language. In my opinion in the modern world it is a good thing to know different languages. I ask the indulgence of my listeners not to expect from me a discussion

1. Address at Indian Students Hostel, London, 2 November 1935. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 13 November 1935.

of current politics of my country, for, as you know fairly well, I had hardly any contact with the developments that have taken place during the past four years, the period which I have more or less spent in jail.²

It is a long time since I left the banks of the Thames after completing my studies here. In spite of this long passage of time I am not still old. I think there is something of that spirit of youth in me, and I therefore find it a pleasure to mix with young men and women of my country. For I try to get something from their energy. To my great regret many of our younger people are terribly old in their hearts and in their minds. Sometimes I have come to the conclusion that they are born old. But it is a truism that the next generation will have to come from the youth of a country and I think it is to them that we shall rightly look for the future.

As for the tribute paid to me for my spirit of sacrifice and services rendered to the country, I thank you for your affection; but we cannot turn ourselves here or even in our country into a mutual admiration society, for we must face our work, however difficult it may be, with courage and laughter. Many young speakers have assured me that they will return to India to work for the emancipation of our country. It is not a dignified thing to use such a language. Unless you know perfectly well that you can live up to the language used by you, you should not use such language. Although there has been no lack of brave sons and daughters in India to serve the motherland, I still think that many of you do not come up to the mark that is expected by the nation. I have a strong feeling in me that Indian students have acted strangely in the past. They have talked big things but have acted little. Similarly it is not pleasant for me to hear about our work for India. For anyone with any measure of self-respect cannot fail to realise that it is his duty to work for his country. I do not mean that every young man should forego the pleasures of life to which youth is entitled; but I cannot forget what is happening in our country. Similarly, no young Indian can forget what is happening in India at the present moment. India today is as heavily manacled as she was ever in the past. She is suffering as much as she had suffered in the past. What I, therefore, want is not a large gathering to talk heroic things but a nucleus of even five students to create a better and different situation in India.

With so many issues round about us what we have to consider is the solution of the problems in India. Let us try to translate our

2. He continued the speech in English from this point.

thoughts into facts and realities. The most obvious problem of India today is her poverty, her exploitation. Does that not appear to you as a very major problem of our country? If that problem is not solved what is the use of getting other things done? In applying our efforts to the solution of this problem think in terms of independent India, at least of India free from foreign rule. Do not think in terms of the Chamber of Princes and federation or in terms of the Round Table Conferences. Do you think India has gone through the fire to make the princes of India the rulers of the country? Or do you imagine that with the process of Indianisation the problem of India is solved? Are we to tolerate exploitation and suffering? To me that is utterly impossible. It would be better for us—and for the ancient country of ours which has such a glorious past—to be obliterated from the face of the earth rather than to continue as a worm amongst the nations. So do your duty, do not follow those who say, "They also serve who stand and wait." I do not believe in that.

24. Interview with Students¹

Question : What is the Congress attitude to socialism and communism?

Jawaharlal Nehru: In India today there is a tremendous clash of ideas and nationalism is bound to be a dominating influence. But it is essentially an anti-imperialist urge. It is perfectly correct to say that the backbone of the Indian National Congress is the lower middle class and that it has got mass support from the peasantry. The movement in India is likely to develop with a large peasant movement and Mahatma Gandhi essentially represents a vast mass of peasantry. The Congress is a dynamic and a moving organisation. It is moving towards socialism, though it might be vague and utopian. But the Congress socialist group is a scientific socialist party with a Marxist outlook.

Q: How far is the terrorist movement organised in India?

1. London, 4 November 1935. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 13 November 1935.

JN: A terrorist movement hardly exists in India. As a matter of fact there are hardly any people who think in terms of terrorist activity. It is more an individual affair than an organised one.

Q: Do you think there will be a change in the Congress ideology in the near future?

JN: It is quite conceivable that the Congress may have to face the problem in the near future of whether to shed its reactionary past. Or a time may even come when it may be called upon not only to shed the reactionary past but also to split itself. It is quite possible that some such cleavage may take place, though I am in no position to say if it will be in the near future or not.

Q: What has been the role of the millowners?

JN: It is absurd to say that the millowners are behind the Congress although some of them have exploited the Congress movement for their own benefit. Yet though they exploited the Congress they did not help it financially.

Q: Are there any moderates in the Congress?

JN: Yes, there is some moderate element in it. But the Congress stands for independence. That is quite clear.

Q: What is Mahatma Gandhi's attitude towards the princes and the capitalists?

JN: Gandhiji is a very great and complex person. I do not mean that in a humorous sense. He has performed miracles in India. We must realise the tremendous change he has brought about in India. The first object of Gandhiji was somehow to change the character of the Indian masses. He changed their outlook. He changed their character. India is changed and she cannot forget that it is due to Mahatma Gandhi. He is entirely a revolutionary man of action. He is a dynamic figure and not static. He continues to grow.

So long as he is alive, Mahatma Gandhi will remain a tremendous personality. Though theoretically he may not be a political leader his influence would always be felt.

Q: What is the influence of fascism on the Congress?

JN : A section of the Congress is definitely fascist. It cannot help being otherwise as events in Europe must have their repercussions in India. But I think that real fascism in India is bound to be against British imperialism. It is bound to be strongly nationalist in outlook.

Q : Are any of the princes fascists?

JN : I know that a good many ministers of the Indian princes are definitely fascists.

Q : How far would you support the Congress socialist group?

JN : I am in general agreement with the Congress socialist group which has adopted scientific socialism with the Marxist outlook as its goal. Of course I cannot say that I whole-heartedly support it because I have not sufficiently acquainted myself with its work to warrant such a support.

75. On the Indian Situation¹

Owing to my long absence from public affairs and want of contact with my colleagues in India, I am unable to judge the situation in India in any detail or to suggest any immediate course of action. That will be unfair both to my colleagues and to myself, but the main developments are clear enough. Nationalism, which has been inevitably the greatest urge in India, like in all subject countries, is still the dominant urge; but other forces, mainly economic, have also played a growing part there. Socialistic ideas are becoming more and more important and a feeling is arising among large numbers of the middle class intellectuals that scientific socialism is the only course open to India as well as the rest of the world. This has taken shape in India in the formation of the Congress socialist group which seems to represent a working alliance between socialism and nationalism.

I do not know much about the Congress Socialist Party because it was formed during my period of imprisonment and therefore I cannot

¹ London, 12 November 1935. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 19 November 1935.

discuss its programme and policy. But as I am myself a confirmed believer in a socialistic solution of our problems I welcome the effort to bring this to the forefront in India.

It seems to me also that there are definite indications of a fascist spirit growing in the country even among the ranks of the Congress. This is vague and unorganised so far. It is inevitable, perhaps, as a reaction to the fascism of the government and the Indian princes. Indeed, the whole background of Indian politics today is one of struggle against fascism. Questions about the constitution and the like are, in my opinion, very secondary when the mass of the people have only one feeling—that of economic helplessness. Questions regarding the working of the new Act, therefore, are very secondary. The recent certification by the Viceroy of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the bombing on the frontier, and the attitude of the official element all over the country, are significant preliminaries to the introduction of the new constitution which Sir Samuel Hoare praised so unctuously at Geneva² and elsewhere.

A very noticeable feature of the Indian situation is the progressive deterioration, both moral and intellectual, of the higher services in India, including English and Indian officers alike. It is the sergeant-major's attitude that is in evidence or the policeman's everywhere and the official who represents this attitude best is promoted to the upper ranks. Thus the major problem that confronts the country is how to deal with this development. All other problems have to be fitted in with this. The Indian National Congress as a whole does not represent a definite party or group. It is much more of a popular front against imperialism comprising all manner of varying groups with differing ideologies. It may be compared to the *Front Populaire* in France.³ It is difficult to say how matters will develop in the country. On the one hand, the desire to keep a joint anti-imperialist front is strong in most groups. On the other hand, the growth of socialist ideologies brings social and economic issues to the forefront and thereby causes fissures in the common nationalistic front.

2. At the Assembly of the League of Nations on 11 September 1935, Hoare declared that Britain would be "second to none" in upholding the League covenant and that, with the British Government's resolve to promote self-government in their own territory, "only a few weeks ago, I was responsible for helping to pass through the Imperial Parliament a great and complicated measure to extend self-government to India."
3. An alliance of liberals, socialists, communists and other centre and left-wing parties against fascism, which was proposed by the Communist International in 1935 and adopted in France and Spain.

Nationalism as such, though inevitable under the present conditions, offers no solution of the basic economic problems of the country. The greatest problem today is probably the agrarian problem and nationalism has no real solution to it. It is more or less based on maintenance of the *status quo* with minor ameliorations. Socialism, on the other hand, directly tackles all such problems. I, for one, am convinced that only a basic and fundamental change in a collectivist direction can meet the agrarian situation and petty efforts at reforms are doomed to fail. It is difficult to say what the exact steps in this direction will be or so much will depend on the growth of the struggle in India and on international factors. Together with cooperative and collectivist farming a progressive industrialisation of the country is highly desirable in order to raise the standard of living and provide employment for the unemployed masses. So far as I know, all these problems are only being considered in a scientific spirit by the socialist element in the country.

As for the new constitution, it is almost unanimously admitted in India that it is a monstrosity. No one likes it. The vast majority of the anti-imperialist forces in the country are quite clear that there cannot be a shadow of cooperation in this further attempt to add to our shackles and to convert India even more than it is at present into a feudal dominion.

What the exact steps would be or should be taken in rejecting this constitution I am not prepared to say at present without consultations with my colleagues.

The Communal Award has been strongly objected to and the Congress attitude criticised. It seems to me that the main thing about the Award, which is fatal to its consideration, is not so much the fact of its giving more or less to certain groups but that it divides the people of India into a large number of different religious compartments and thereby makes it exceedingly difficult for us to grow democratically or to consider real social problems. No democrat and no socialist can ever accept such a division of our country which can only perpetuate our bondage.

At the same time obviously the solution of the problem lies not in one community attacking another but in a joint effort. Such a joint effort will have nothing to do with pacts and compromises between a few odd people whose interests lie in stressing communal differences and the basis of whose political existence is communalism. Communalists in India are inevitably political reactionaries. The joint effort will come from the direction of the public mind towards the social issues which are the real issues that count.

26. To Rajendra Prasad¹

Badenweiler
20.11.1935

My dear Rajendra Babu,

On my return from London I received your two letters dated 18th and 26th October.

As for Swaraj Bhawan I knew there had been some misunderstanding on the part of Mohanlalji² but I am really surprised at the extent of this misunderstanding. I am grateful for the steps you have taken in the matter and I am sure that everything that is necessary will be done at your instance. I am sorry that this confusion arose, partly at my instance, and caused you unnecessary trouble.

The question of building a hospital in a part of the Swaraj Bhawan compound is no urgent one and had better be left over for the present. In any event I do not see how it can be considered even unless there is a tangible scheme before us with definite promise of financial backing. It seems to me rather absurd for us to agree to a vague proposal which might later fall through for lack of support.

The question of foreign propaganda is an intricate one and involves all manner of considerations.³ At the same time it is important and I think the Working Committee cannot ignore it.⁴ My own viewpoint in regard to it is perhaps a little different from others. It is often said, with perfect justice, that there is colossal ignorance about India in foreign countries. I would add that there is almost equally great ignorance about foreign countries in India. For me it is quite impossible to isolate the Indian problem from world problems. They are ultimately and even presently one and the same though naturally there are local differences. In order therefore for us to understand fully and endeavour to solve our own national problems it is quite essential for us to see them in relation to international affairs. I am afraid this is not the outlook of most of our Congress leaders, including perhaps Bapu. For a member of the Working Committee to say

1. Home Department (Political) File No. 1/2/36, National Archives of India.

2. Mohanlal Saxena.

3. In his letter of 26 October 1935 he had asked for Jawaharlal's advice and opinion regarding the setting up of agencies in foreign countries.

4. At the A.I.C.C. meeting in Madras on 18 October 1935 it was proposed that "in view of the anti-Indian propaganda by the imperialist powers carried on abroad, the Working Committee be authorised to take such action as it considers proper and feasible to undo the evil."

he is ignorant of or is not interested in international currents and affairs seems to me an extraordinary thing. If even the chosen executive of the Congress is ignorant of these how can it guide the nation? It is not good enough to say that we can consult experts about such matters. Experts do not shape wide policies or ought not to do so. And, in any event, it is the job of the Working Committee members and leading Congressmen to become experts in these vital problems if they are to guide aright.

Therefore I think it very necessary that we should develop as many international contacts as possible, more for our education than for the purpose of counteracting false propaganda. It is desirable for leading Congressmen to visit foreign countries from time to time to get into touch with worthwhile personalities there in the political, economic and cultural fields. It is also desirable for us to employ young men in this foreign work so as to train them for it. All this may sound ambitious and expensive and there will be all manner of difficulties, governmental and others. But it is the viewpoint that counts. If this is accepted it can be given effect to as circumstances permit.

Foreign propaganda as such in the restricted sense of the word cannot carry us far. There is no real field for it as people in other countries are too much occupied with their own troubles. What is more important is more publicity than propaganda. This helps in supplying facts and figures to people interested, and they are many, and also brings us international contacts. Publicity work and contacts must primarily be based on a strong and ably-staffed foreign department of the Congress in India.⁵ With the help of the air mail much can be done. But it is important that the person in charge must himself have intimate knowledge of politics and personalities abroad. The present bulletin, issued by the A.I.C.C. office, does some good, but it does not take us far.

The second step might be the establishment of publicity and information bureaus in suitable countries abroad. These can be of great help and their cost need not be prohibitive. If such a step were contemplated I would suggest a bureau in Prague in Czechoslovakia. This is at present the best centre for Europe. The fascist countries are out of the question. Russia would present difficulties. London is in some ways a desirable centre but it does not touch the Continent, and it is a very difficult place to work in owing to the mutual rivalries and jealousies of the large number of Indians there. New York would be a good centre, and the Far East ought to have a centre.

5. Jawaharlal established such a department when he became President in 1936.

If the Congress thought of starting such centres I would suggest that a beginning might be made with one and that one at Prague. Such a centre should have a reference library and Indian newspapers etc., and the man in charge should be fully competent for the job.

The idea of having regular branches of the Congress abroad, as we used to have,⁶ is I think wrong. You cannot control them and there is bound to be conflict. The Congress can appoint an individual to represent it in a foreign country if it so chooses, or more modestly, have an information bureau. This can be controlled.

Indians and others in foreign countries can of course start their own groups and societies in sympathy with the Congress. We can even encourage this and cooperate with them in some measure but on the clear understanding that they are no formal part of our organisation. We cannot affiliate them or allow ourselves to be committed by them. It is desirable that such groups and societies do not call themselves "Congress" or "National Congress" as this is likely to mislead.

In London recently a handful of persons have started what they call "The Indian National Congress in Great Britain". Some of these persons may be desirable, others not so. I do not know any of them sufficiently to judge them. But I had a feeling that they were exploiting the name of the Congress. On my arrival in London they distributed a leaflet condemning the organisers of the reception and stating that these people were anti-Congress and were merely pushing themselves forward on this occasion to gain notoriety. The leaflet was not against me, it was only against the reception committee. I believe Reuter cabled to India on the basis of this leaflet that the Congress in London condemned the reception or its organisers.⁷ This is a good instance of the way petty mischief can be done by individuals in the name of the Congress. This affair was a trivial one but it is quite possible that similar contingencies may arise again.

This group of protesters came to see me several times. They wanted me to go to a special function which they wanted to hold in my honour. I did not consent to it as I felt I was likely to be exploited. I also told them that it was very improper for them to use the Congress name for their activities whatever they might be. They were free and welcome to have a separate group working for India but this

6. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 250-253.

7. Reuter reported on 31 October 1935 that the "Congress" presented Jawaharlal a printed address denouncing "the violent anti-Congress propaganda of the so-called friends of India," and alluding to the reception by these "anti-Indian propagandists" expressed the hope that "the Pandit would not associate himself with the dishonest manifestations of self-seeking weathercock politicians."

could not be in the name of the Congress. Further that their stationer had been most objectionable. I enclose a letter from them to give their address. The letter gives a wrong impression of what I told them.⁸ One would imagine I approved of their organisation (I doubt if there is really an organisation) when I strongly urged them to drop the name and give up attacking others.

To avoid misconceptions I would suggest that the A.I.C.C. office might write to these people informing them that, while they welcomed the formation of Indian organisations abroad in the cause of Indian freedom, such organisations should not use the Congress name or make it appear in any way that they are a Congress agency. The present policy of the Congress is not to have branches abroad or to affiliate outside committees. Any organisations, however, that support Congress policy will have the cooperation of the A.I.C.C. office in the measure that is considered necessary and desirable. In pursuance of this policy the A.I.C.C. office has cooperated with some existing groups in London although they have represented varying outlooks. People who wish to help our cause should concentrate on the work before us and not go out of their way to attack other groups who might be working on slightly different lines. In the event of the Congress deciding to have accredited representatives or agencies abroad formal steps on this behalf will be taken. This cannot be done casually by individuals or groups. Therefore the name of the Indian National Congress they have adopted should be dropped and another non-committal name taken.

Some such letter might be sent to them. Also I think a brief statement might be issued somewhat as follows :

It has been stated in the press and in messages from London that an organisation has been formed in London bearing the name "The Indian National Congress in Great Britain". The A.I.C.C. office has no knowledge of this and it deprecates the use of the Congress name in this way without any official authority. The Congress has at present no official agency abroad though it gladly cooperates with and welcomes the formation of Indian or non-Indian groups abroad to serve the cause of India and the Congress. But such groups cannot use the name of the Congress or commit it in any way. As has been stated, the President and the Working Committee are earnestly engaged in considering the problem of international contacts and

8. The letter thanked Jawaharlal for the interest shown by him in their organisation and assured him of their determination to carry on Congress propaganda in England.

foreign publicity. Any steps that they may decide upon to take in this connection will be placed before the public in due course.

In London I met the members of the various India groups individually and severally. You know about them. There is the Conciliation Group⁹ (Carl Heath and Agatha Harrison etc.). These are good people, mostly Quakers, who believe in bringing about contacts between prominent Indians and men in authority. They work quietly and individually, frequently approaching the big noises. I like these people, but I must say that I do not attach much importance to this trend of work. I do not think it takes us anywhere and sometimes it may add to our difficulties by creating confusion of issues. Vital questions of national policy become converted into personal affairs and the merits and demerits of particular persons. To me it is wholly immaterial what the personal virtues or failings of an Irwin, a Willingdon, or a Linlithgow¹⁰ might be. We have to deal with the policy of British imperialism. Not so with the Conciliation Group.

Then there is the "Friends of India" group.¹¹ Also good and doing useful work in publicity, but generally ineffective. There are no outstanding personalities among them, so far as I can see. Reginald Reynolds is one of them, but even he felt that they were becoming ineffective.

A third group is the "India League".¹² This has become connected with the left wing of Labour and has some prominent men in it, like Harold Laski. Because of this it is definitely socialistic in outlook. Of the three it is the only really political organisation. The man who runs it is V. K. Krishna Menon whom perhaps you know. I met him for the first time. He is very able and energetic and is highly thought of in intellectual, journalistic and left-wing Labour circles. He has the virtues and failings of the intellectual. I was very favourably impressed by him. Unfortunately he has been very ill and has spent the last six months in the hospital.

9. Started in 1931 on the initiative of Mahatma Gandhi during his visit to London, it sought to promote mutual understanding between India and Britain. Carl Heath was president and Agatha Harrison secretary.
10. (1887-1952); chairman, Joint Select Committee on Indian Constitutional Reforms, 1933; Viceroy of India, 1936-43.
11. The Friends of India Society was formed on 11 August 1930 by Reginald Reynolds and others to "create and organise opinion in Great Britain in favour of India's right to self-determination" and to make known the significance of Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolence movement.
12. Started by V. K. Krishna Menon in 1930.

I do not know if this letter, in spite of its growing length, will be intelligible. I am afraid it is patchy, and I have just jotted down odd ideas without arranging them in proper order or giving a real answer to your question. You point out two difficulties in the way of foreign work—personal and finances. Both are formidable. There is a third. The Congress is such a vague and inchoate body today that it will be exceedingly difficult to find anyone to represent it properly. Such a representative, apart from general competence, must be in harmony with the Congress policy and must speak in the mental language of the West. It is quite possible to imagine that some of our prominent Congress leaders might be so out of tune with the thought of the West as to be hardly comprehensible here. I myself, with all my knowledge of men and events in India, find it very difficult at times to understand our own leaders. It almost seems to me that they are speaking in an unknown language. If I feel this way you can appreciate how much more a Westerner will feel.

This is a general consideration. Coming to the particular—I feel that the Congress today is in a state of ideological flux and does not quite know its mind. Take the recent A.I.C.C. meeting in Madras. All the major decisions were no decisions¹³—they were merely a putting off of the decision or a delicate balancing on the fence. Our policy all along the line, even mentally, is becoming more and more one of non-action and non-thought. Constitutionally I am unable to appreciate this as I hold definite views about most matters, and am the reverse of a passive individual. Nonviolent noncooperation and civil disobedience were not to me mere non-resistance but the height of active resistance to evil doing. This dynamic quality seems to have disappeared now and we have a lifeless body which neither thinks nor acts and over which old incantations are repeated to give it the semblance of life.

Suppose you appointed me a Congress agent abroad—and I have certain qualifications which many others do not possess—what could I do. Apart from acting as a post office I would have no functions. The Congress having no clear policy on any matter which interests the West, I would simply have to keep mum.

Subhas Bose is in many ways an excellent person to have. He has considerable knowledge of foreign affairs and has many contacts. He would carry weight. But he would have the same difficulty as I would have, perhaps, more of it.

13. The resolution on office acceptance deferred the decision to the Lucknow Congress, and that on the Indian states merely reiterated an earlier resolution that the burden of the struggle "must necessarily fall on the states people themselves."

These are some odd thoughts for you to consider. I cannot go on as this letter is already unconscionably long.

Kamala's condition has been slowly improving but occasionally there are setbacks which dishearten. I am afraid that in any event she will be bed-ridden for long. I should certainly like to return to India in time for the Congress and I shall try to do so if I can possibly manage it.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

27. To Mohanlal Saxena¹

Badenweiler
Dec. 6, 1935

My dear Mohanlal,

Your letter came some little time ago but I have been so terribly occupied with various activities that I could not answer it earlier.

Congress Jubilee²—I am afraid I cannot send you a fervent appeal such as you suggest. These appeals have grown very stale and they bore me. However, I am sending you a message of greeting. You can make such use of it as you like. I am also sending a copy of this to Kripalani. A large number of newspapers in India have also asked me to send Jubilee messages for their special numbers. I am not sending any. I suppose you will issue my message of greeting to them.

As for foreign messages, I am afraid I cannot do anything. There is no time.

I have been thoroughly ashamed and humiliated at the disgraceful state of affairs of our provincial Congress and reception committee.³ More I cannot say, nor indeed am I in a position to know.

Kamala's condition continues to be unsatisfactory. A slight improvement is followed by a setback.

With love,

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

1. A.I.C.C. File No. 20/1935, p. 3, N.M.M.L.

2. The golden jubilee of the Indian National Congress was to be celebrated on 28 December 1935.

3. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 410-411.

28. Message for the Jubilee of the Congress¹

It is snowing outside as I write, and the landscape is all white and glistening. Snowflakes float in the air and glide down soundlessly and cover everything with the beautiful garment of winter. Evergreens hold out their branches to catch the flakes and even trees which were but yesterday cheerless, devoid of leaf and flower, now cling to them and transform themselves into fairy objects holding up their delicate tracery against the sky. The scene is one of surpassing loveliness and one gazes at it overwhelmed with its beauty.

But sitting here in Badenweiler on the edge of the Black Forest with the Rhine and the frontier of France in the far distance, my thoughts cross the seas and the continents and go to my homeland. And I think—specially in this year and month of the Congress Jubilee—of that great organisation, and what it has meant to India and to each one of us, what it has been, what it was and what it may be in future.

Fifty years are not much in the life of a nation, a mere flash in the millennia of India's long past. Yet fifty years are a long period in a human life and within their span can be crowded a world of endeavour and achievement. These fifty years have seen the end of an era and mighty transformation everywhere. How have we fared in this period? Have we moved with the ever-rushing river of life and adapted ourselves to the changing conditions, or do we remain in backwaters that move not and change little, entangled in weeds that paralyse us and benumb our mind and spirit? The real change and growth is of the spirit and the mind, the rest merely follows it.

Fifty years of the Congress tell us where we were and what we are. Read the reports of the early Congress and the astounding and hardly comprehensible new mentality that they now exhibit. And then go through its later tribulations and conflicts, its splits and divisions, when those who lived in the weeds and backwaters wanted to hold it back but could not do so.

With much travail it emerged to freer waters and much to its own surprise found itself younger and stronger than ever. A time came when, under the inspiration of a great leader, it tried to break all shackles which still held it back and hurled itself forward with the pride and confidence of youth.

1. Badenweiler, 6 December 1935. *The Tribune*, 28 December 1935.

There were greater difficulties and obstacles than it had expected and many a time it stumbled and staggered, but ever it kept its eyes on the star of freedom that beckoned. It became a symbol to millions of their hearts' desire and they gave it a willing allegiance. As the struggle became fiercer and difficulties greater ever it kept in the forefront and in its darkest hours never gave up hope.

What of us who have grown up under its wings and caught sometimes the reflection of its greatness? We are of it, how can we think ourselves as apart from it? What we have done has been under its inspiration; our achievement has not been the achievement of individuals but of a vast multitude spread out all over our great country and bound together with the invisible link of the Congress. We have felt strong and brave because of that bond and we have greatly dared because of it.

On the Jubilee occasion of the Congress I should like to send from a far country greetings to those innumerable links that make up the strong chain of the Congress, to comrades who have many a gallant struggle to their credit and many another to face in the future, to the innumerable men and women of India who have fought a brave fight for freedom under the Congress flag. In the past, the Congress has stood for full freedom and it has widened its horizon and looked to the masses. May it never falter or forget its mission and may it become even more than it has been the real representative and the voice of millions, who toil and suffer in our country and seek to remove all shackles, political, social and economic, that prevent them from rising to the height of their destiny.

29. On the Allegation of the Bengal Government¹

A friend² has just drawn my attention to the following paragraph appearing in the Bengal Government's Administration Report for 1934-35....³

1. Statement to the press, Badenweiler, 6 December 1935. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 17 December 1935.
2. Mahadeva Desai had wired to Jawaharlal about the Bengal government's reference to him.
3. See paragraph as quoted in the following item.

This paragraph contains a number of errors and insinuations, but, realising as I do that the Bengal Government and I are as the poles apart in regard to ideas and outlook, it would serve little purpose for me to argue these matters with them. But there is one specific statement in it—that I was attempting to carry on an agitation under the false cloak of anti-untouchability activities and with the money collected for Harijan work—which I cannot, in fairness to my colleagues in Bengal, Harijan Seva Sangh, and myself, allow to pass uncontradicted. That statement is an absolute falsehood which neither had nor could have had the shadow of a foundation. Whatever else I might be guilty of, I hope that I have never indulged in duplicity in my work.

A definite and unequivocal statement having been made by Sir John Anderson's¹ government in Bengal and having been contradicted by me, it is desirable in the interests of public morals for them either to justify it or to withdraw it publicly and express regret for it. I do not know what the Bengal Government's standard of morality is, but I do know that there are certain things which are not done by decent people, and if an error is committed, an apology is forthcoming. An error in my case may not matter much, for the opinions that my countrymen form of me are not based on the Bengal Government's views on the subject. But a government has the tremendous power of the state's apparatus of coercion behind it and its errors are likely to affect the lives and liberties of vast numbers of people.

4. (1882-1958); Governor of Bengal, 1932-38; member of the War Cabinet, 1940-45.

30. To the Editor, *Manchester Guardian*¹

Sir,

The Bengal Government, faced, according to it, by the twin spectres of terrorism and sedition, and bravely grappling with them, and in doing so having to suppress its inherent love of liberty and civil freedom, must provoke the sympathy and indulgence of many people in England. What can be more distasteful to it than to be compelled by force of circumstances to keep a few odd thousands in prisons and internment camps

1. Badenweiler, 7 December 1935. *Manchester Guardian*, 10 December 1935.

without trial or conviction and to enforce a host of laws which prevent free speech or assembly and the normal functioning of the press and even ordinary political and labour activities?

A recent instance of the working of the Bengal Government's mind will perhaps interest you, Sir, as it gives us a glimpse of how this mighty machine grapples with the difficult problems it has to solve. A friend of mine in India has drawn my attention to a paragraph in the Bengal Government's Administration Report for 1934-35. This reads as follows:

During the third week of January Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru paid a short visit to Calcutta and after consultations with the leaders of most of the subversive movements in Bengal prescribed a militant programme based mainly on his own extreme socialist views and designed primarily to attract the peasant masses. This agitation was to be carried on under the guise of anti-untouchability activities and with the money collected for Harijan work. He was eventually prosecuted before the Chief Presidency Magistrate in respect of three violent and provocative speeches delivered during this visit. The Pandit did not defend himself, beyond attempting to deliver a further seditious speech from the dock, and was sentenced to two years simple imprisonment on 16th February. His arrest and conviction aroused little excitement. In Calcutta a partial hartal was observed by Hindu shopkeepers, though vehicular traffic was not interrupted. Elsewhere in Bengal there was no demonstration. This indifference can be attributed partly to the alarm felt about his expropriatory views by the average propertied Congressman, and partly to the general dissatisfaction with the lack of initiative shown by the leaders of the Congress.

I would not presume to argue with the Bengal Government about my activities—subversive, militant or socialistic—or about the character of my friends and comrades. I realise that we differ in outlook. But there is a specific statement in this paragraph which refers to my attempt to carry on an agitation under the guise of anti-untouchability activities and with the money collected for Harijan work. I do not remember, during a fairly long experience of public affairs, to have come across a more amazing and astounding lie which has not the shadow of a foundation. I have many failings but I had hoped that duplicity was not one of them. I realise that it is an impertinence for an ex-convict and a sedition-monger to contradict a statement emanating from the innermost sanctum of the Bengal Government, even though that may be based on information received from not over-intelligent spies and informers. In the normal course of events I would have been in prison now

and unable to have my say. But, being out, I cannot allow a falsehood of this kind to go unchallenged and, being subjected to long periods of suppression, it is a relief to have my say occasionally. I owe it also to the Harijan Seva Sangh (the Anti-Untouchability Society), that most cautious and respectable body, to clear them, as far as I can, from the imputation.

The personal aspect of this question is of little importance. My own fate does not matter overmuch. But the fate of thousands of young men and women, wasting their bright young lives in prisons and concentration camps, is of far greater consequence, as also the suppression and suffocation of a great and sensitive people. It is interesting to note on what this is based—the information supplied by the unlovely tribe of informers whose trade it is to spy and betray. That information goes through various offices and departments and becomes ultimately the voice of government, the considered opinion of those who hold, unchecked and without bending, the reins of authority, and the basis for government action. The victim seldom knows what, if any, is the charge, and has no opportunity to meet it and rebut it. During the long and weary hours and months and years of his seclusion he can only wonder at the august and mysterious ways of governments.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

31. To Lord Lothian¹

Badenweiler
December 9, 1935

Dear Lord Lothian,²

Your letter³ of the 6th has only reached me today. I do not know why

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Reprinted in *A Bunch of Old Letters*, (Bombay, 1958), pp. 127-129.
2. Marquess of Lothian (1882-1940); Liberal politician; editor, *Round Table*; chairman, Indian Franchise Committee, 1932; ambassador to Washington, 1939-40.
3. Lord Lothian had invited Jawaharlal to stay with him at his residence, Blickling Hall. He proposed to invite Lord Halifax (Lord Irwin) also and hoped that though their views on recent events in India and on political questions were divergent, a meeting was desirable, as "for good or for evil the destinies of India and England are still closely interlocked."

even air mail letters should take so long in transit. Anyway I hasten to reply to it.

I have been looking forward to meeting you greatly and I have been considerably interested in various writings of yours that have come my way. Often I could not agree with your approach to a question or to your conclusion, but invariably I found them provoking me to think and there was also sometimes a measure of agreement. It is always a pleasure to meet people who open out new avenues of thought and help one to see a little more than the tiny corner of the world which is the average person's mental beat. As you say, few people see more than this little corner, and the agonising conflicts of today are certainly made worse by this narrowness of approach. This would be unfortunate at any time; in the present revolutionary epoch it is far more so. I do not think it is possible to charm away the conflicts merely by friendly contacts between well-intentioned persons. The conflicts are obviously deeper and the best of individuals seem to me to play a relatively unimportant role when vast elemental forces are at play against each other. We can try to understand the root causes of these conflicts, as far as we can, and then seek to remove them. But it is so very, very difficult to consider them apart from our own prejudices and sectional interests. The pleasantest of smiles does not get over these ingrained prejudices and the varying world-outlooks that they produce. Still, the attempt must be made to cultivate friendly contacts for without them the world would be a drearier place even than it is. They do certainly help, to a certain extent, in creating an atmosphere which makes understanding possible later on; they lessen the bitterness of individuals and groups; they widen the individual's horizon; and it is one of the chief delights of life to meet worthwhile persons.

All this, surely, is very much worth having and so I am all in favour of developing such contacts. Personally, in spite of my strong convictions, I am not devoid of the student's approach to life and its problems. Dogmas irritate me, whether they are religious or political or economic, and my mind is always searching for the path I should follow. I try not to close it. This makes me welcome all the more personal contacts. Books help, and they have been an unfailing solace to me for many years; but personal touch with the people behind books and ideas and actions has something vital about it which even books do not have.

I should have liked to meet you. Your friendly and welcome letter has increased my desire to do so. I like the beautiful houses and countryside of England and your superlative description of Blickling attracts me, but it is really the man whom I want to see, not the house he owns. I should have liked to meet Lord Halifax also, though I must confess

to you that I feel a certain hesitation in meeting people who have been officially associated with the Government of India during the past nightmare years. That period is full of horror to us and it is very difficult for me to understand how any sensitive person could tolerate it, much less give his approval to it. It is not so much the repression and suppression of much that was best in India that I refer to, but the manner of it. There was, and is, in it an indecency and vulgarity that I could hardly have conceived. And the wonder of it is that hardly anyone in England realizes this or has any idea of what is happening in India's mind and heart.

I suppose ultimately this will pass. But with this overpowering background it is a little difficult to think in terms of personal contacts. It is not easy to shake hands with a person who is endeavouring to strangle you. In spite of this, I am sure the time will come when we will shake hands and it is up to us to hasten that time.

I have been sorely tempted to fall in with your proposal and to visit England specially to see you at the beginning of January. It is exceedingly good of you to offer to postpone your departure for America by a few days in order to meet me. But with all my desire to do so, I feel that I cannot manage it without upsetting many arrangements which I have already made. The major reason is my wife. I had particularly promised to be with her about that time as our daughter will also be with us then. Some friends from other parts of Europe are also expected. Then again, if I go to England early in January I cannot go again later in the month as I had intended to do, and this would disappoint many friends there. Probably I shall leave for India early in February.

I must regretfully, therefore, give up the idea of seeing you before you sail for America. It is a real disappointment for me. It is just possible that I may return to Europe in the late summer. If I do so I shall make a point of seeking you out.

Miss Agatha Harrison writes to me that I might have met Mr. Alex. Fraser⁴ at your house. To miss seeing him is an additional regret for I have followed with interest, though rather vaguely and from a distance, the good work of his unique college in West Africa.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. (1873-1963); member of the Church Missionary Society; served on the Indian Village Education Commission, 1920-21; principal, Prince of Wales College, Accra, Ghana, 1924-35.

32. Congress the Voice of India¹

I am happy to learn that our countrymen in England are joining in celebrating the jubilee of the Indian National Congress. The Congress claims allegiance from every Indian wherever he or she might be. In the course of fifty years, through struggle and sacrifice, it has established its unchallengeable right to represent the Indian people; it is the voice of India, and behind that gentle voice lie the fire and iron will of a nation determined to be free. Six years ago it took the pledge of independence. That pledge holds and will hold till it is redeemed.

I send my greetings to comrades and friends on this occasion and join with them in our homage to the Congress and to the ideal of freedom for the Indian masses.

1. Message read at a function in London, 28 December 1935. *The Tribune*, 9 January 1936.

33. India and the World¹

Faced by repeated crises and engrossed in their domestic troubles, it is not surprising that the people of the West should pay little attention to India. A few may feel drawn to the rich past of India and admire her ancient culture, some may feel an instinctive sympathy with a people struggling for freedom, others may have the humanitarian urge to condemn the exploitation and brutal suppression of a great people by an imperialist power. But the great majority are supremely ignorant of conditions in India. They have troubles of their own; why add to them?

And yet every intelligent dabbler in public affairs knows that the problems of the modern world cannot be kept in watertight compartments; they cannot be dealt with successfully separately and without regard to the others; they run into each other and, in the final analysis, form one single world problem with many different facets. Events in the deserts and waste lands of East Africa echo in distant chancellories and cast their heavy shadow over Europe; a shot fired in eastern Siberia may set

1. Badenweiler, 6 January 1936. First published in *Vendredi*, Paris, 1936. Reprinted in *India and the World*, (London, 1936), pp. 200-209.

the world on fire. Many difficult problems trouble Europe today, and yet it may well be that the future historian, with a truer perspective, will consider China and India as the most significant problems of today, and as having a greater influence on the future shaping of world events. For, essentially, India and China are world problems, and to ignore them, or to minimize their significance, is to betray a woeful ignorance of the trend of world affairs and to fail to understand completely the basic disease from which all of us suffer.

The problem of India is thus of the present, of today. To admire or condemn her past does not help us much, except in so far as an understanding of the past helps us to understand the present. We have to realize that any big thing that will happen there will affect the larger world to a great extent, and none of us, wherever we may live and whatever national or other allegiance might claim us, can be unaffected by it. It is, therefore, from this wider point of view that we must consider it, as a part of the more immediate problems that confront us.

It is well known that the possession of India has for more than a century and a half vitally affected British foreign and domestic policy; the wealth and exploitation of India gave England the needed capital to develop her great industries in the early days of the industrial revolution and then provided her with markets for her manufactured goods; India was ever in the background in the Napoleonic wars as well as in the Crimean war;² and the desire to safeguard the routes to India led England to interfere with Egypt and the countries of the Middle East. That governing policy has continued in the post-war world, and England still clings tenaciously to these routes. Soon after the Great War there even came a grandiose vision to British statesmen of founding a great Middle Eastern empire stretching from Constantinople to India. But that vision faded chiefly because of Soviet Russia and Kemal Pasha, and the rise of Reza Shah³ in Persia, and Amanullah in Afghanistan, and the establishment of the French mandate in Syria.⁴ The great idea did not materialize, but, even so, England managed to keep a fair measure of control over the land route to India and, because of this, came into

2. Fought between Russia on the one hand and Britain, France and Turkey on the other from 1854 to 1856.

3. (1877-1944); Shah of Iran, 1925-41. He carried out reforms largely on the model of Kemal Ataturk in Turkey.

4. The French mandate in Syria, which gave France virtual control of internal affairs, was established on 25 April 1920 and approved by the League of Nations on 24 July 1922.

conflict with Turkey over Mosul.⁵ It is that governing policy which has induced England suddenly to become a champion of the League of Nations in Ethiopia. Her moral instincts were not so much roused when the League was flouted in Manchuria.⁶

The world problem is ultimately one of imperialism—the finance-imperialism of the present day. In Europe and elsewhere the rise of fascism is one very important aspect of the problem, as well as the rise and growing strength of Soviet Russia, as representing a new order fundamentally opposed to that of imperialism. The lining-up of Europe in mutually hostile and anti-fascist groups represents the conflict of that imperialism with the new forces that threaten it. In the colonial and subject countries the same conflict takes the shape of nationalist movements struggling for freedom, with an ever-developing social issue colouring and influencing nationalism. Imperialism functions increasingly in a fascist way in its colonial dependencies. Thus England, proudly laying stress on its democratic constitution at home, acts after the fascist fashion in India.

It is clear that any breach in the imperialist front anywhere has its repercussions all over the world. A victory of fascism in Europe or elsewhere strengthens imperialism and reacts everywhere, a setback to it weakens imperialism. Similarly, the triumph of a freedom movement in a colonial or subject country is a blow to imperialism and fascism, and it is therefore easy to understand why the Nazi leaders frown on Indian nationalism, and express their approval of the continuation of British domination in India.⁷ The problem, considered in its basic aspects, is simple enough, and yet, in the intricate play of various world forces, it sometimes becomes very complicated, as when two imperialisms confront one another and each tries to exploit the nationalist or anti-fascist tendencies in the subject countries of the other. The only way to get over these complications is to consider the fundamental aspects and not to be led away by opportunist motives of gaining a temporary advantage. Else the temporary advantage is apt to prove a grave disadvantage and a burden later on.

5. The inclusion of Mosul in Iraq had been disputed by Turkey for many years after the first world war.
6. When Japan invaded Manchuria the major powers at the League took no action apart from condemning Japan. But in 1935 England took the lead in imposing sanctions against Italy.
7. Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf* that "England will lose India only when the English administrative machinery in India will be composed of both the races...or when the sword of a powerful enemy will compel her to do so. Indian revolutionaries will never be able to do this...I would always wish to see India under English domination rather than under any other."

India, both historically and by virtue of its importance, has been and is the classic land of modern imperialism. Any disturbance of the imperialist hold on India is bound to have far-reaching consequences in world affairs—it will make a tremendous difference to the world position of Great Britain, and it will give a great impetus to the freedom movements of other colonial countries and thus shake up other imperialisms. A free India would inevitably play a growing part in international affairs, and that part is likely to be on the side of world peace and against imperialism and its offshoots.

Some people imagine that India may develop into a free dominion of the British group of nations like Canada or Australia. This seems to be a fantastic idea. Even the existing dominions, in spite of their numerous links with Great Britain, are gradually drifting apart as their economic interests conflict. The drift is greatest in the case of Ireland, partly for historical reasons, and South Africa.⁸ There are few natural links between India and England, and there is a historical and ever-growing hostility between them. In many parts of the empire there is racial ill-treatment and a policy of exclusion of Indians. But more important still, there is a conflict of economic interests. So long as India is controlled by the British Government this conflict is resolved in favour of Britain, but the moment India becomes a real dominion the two will pull different ways and a break would become inevitable, if the present capitalist order survives till then. There is another interesting aspect to this question. India, by virtue of her size, population, and potential wealth, is far the most important member of the British Empire. So long as the rest of the empire exploits her, she remains on the imperial fringe. But a free India in the British group of nations would inevitably tend to become the centre of gravity of that group; Delhi might challenge London as the nerve-centre of the empire. That position would become intolerable for England as well as the white dominions. They would prefer to have India outside their group, an independent but friendly country, rather than to be boss of their own household.

It seems likely, therefore, that there will be no real half-way house to Indian freedom. When India is strong enough, or when world events force the pace, she will emerge as a completely free country. What

⁸ In southern Ireland de Valera's ministry formed in 1932 demanded the removal of the oath of allegiance to the Crown and abolition of the Governor-Generalship. In South Africa the Minister of Defence warned on 5 February 1935 that attempts to "rashly commit South Africa in overseas war" would lead to civil war.

form that freedom will take and how far political freedom will be accompanied, or followed soon after, by social freedom and a new economic order, it is difficult to say, for this depends on so many factors. Inevitably world crises will affect her and hasten or delay that freedom and shape the social content of it. It is probable that the longer political freedom is delayed the more will the social question dominate the situation; even now it is in the forefront of Indian affairs. Economic conditions are forcing this issue forward, as well as the successful example of Soviet Russia.

When will Indian freedom come? It is dangerous to prophesy. But the world is moving rapidly and crisis succeeds crisis, and the weakening of the whole of British imperialism may be nearer than many people imagine. Within India the national movement has grown tremendously during the last sixteen years, ever since Mahatma Gandhi took its lead and inspired the millions to united effort and sacrifice. During these sixteen years it has continued without a break, though with ups and downs, and three times—in 1920-22, 1930-31, 1932-34—it has functioned through powerful movements of noncooperation and civil disobedience which shook the fabric of British rule in India. The strength of these movements can be judged from the British reaction to them. This took the shape of fierce repression of the typical fascist kind, with suppression of civil liberties, of press, speech, and meeting, of confiscation of funds, lands, and buildings; of the proscription of hundreds of organisations, including schools, universities, hospitals, children's societies, social work clubs, and of course political and labour organizations; of the sending to prison of hundreds of thousands of men and women; and of barbarous beatings and ill-treatment of prisoners and others. On the other hand, an attempt was made to create divisions in the nationalist ranks by offering bribes and inducements to minority groups, and by consolidating all the feudal, reactionary, and obscurantist elements in the country behind the British Government. The outward symbol of this joining together of the reactionaries was the Round Table Conference in London, and the result of this union was the new "constitution" Act passed by the British Government, which in effect tightens the hold of British imperialism and gives greater importance to the reactionary element in the country.

Meanwhile new social forces have gathered strength in India and socialistic and Marxist ideas have spread, in both the ranks of organized labour and the National Congress. The Socialist Party forms an important minority in the National Congress and has an increasing influence. This rise of socialistic ideas has resulted in the development of certain fissiparous tendencies within the Congress, and further developments are

likely to make this ideological cleavage more marked. On the whole, the Congress functions as a kind of joint front (including many groups) — a *front populaire*—against British imperialism, whilst in opposition to it is a joint front of the reactionary and feudal elements with that imperialism. The situation is comparable to the anti-fascist and fascist groupings in Europe. In between the two main groups are smaller groups of people who vacillate, though their sympathies are with the national movement.

The present position in India appears to be complex because the country is recovering from the exhaustion of the last civil disobedience movement, and during such periods a certain confusion is inevitable. New ideas find ready acceptance by many and frighten others. In spite of the fact that there is no civil disobedience movement functioning and conditions might be considered normal, the British Government are continuing their severe repression and suppression of civil liberties. In the name of suppressing communism, the labour movement is harassed,⁹ many trade unions are declared illegal, labour leaders sent to prison; in the name of suppressing terrorism, political work is stopped in some parts of the country. Many important organizations, political and labour, continue to be banned. A law, which was contemptuously thrown out by the legislature, has been enacted by the Viceroy's executive authority, giving enormous powers to the executive and the police to suppress every form of civil liberty and public activity. Thousands are kept permanently in prison without trial or charge, many other thousands are sent to prison for sedition or other political offences. This is the functioning of British rule in India in normal times. This is also the measure of the strength of the freedom movement in India, as well as of the fear of the British Government of it. For the British Government lives in a continuous state of alarm, and when a government is afraid it acts strangely and wildly.

It is clear that the British Government cannot succeed in putting an end to the freedom movement, it can only keep it down for a while when the nation is exhausted. It is also clear that the new Act has displeased and irritated all active elements in the country, and they can never submit to it willingly. There is more resentment and hostility against imperialist domination in India than at any previous time. Gandhi

9. The Bombay Special (Emergency) Powers Act was invoked to suppress the strike in the textile industry on 23 April 1934. Legally registered trade unions such as the Young Workers League were banned and the strike leaders were arrested. In July 1934 the Communist Party of India was banned.

has for the time being retired from active politics,¹⁰ but he continues to be, and will continue to be, far and away the most dominant and influential figure in India, capable of moving millions, and he might return to the political field at any crucial moment. To imagine that he is a back number in Indian politics is the most futile of errors. There are conflicts of ideologies in India and a pulling in different directions, as is natural in a living movement in a great country, but there is unity in the opposition to British imperialism, except in those classes which profit by it, or are the creation of that imperialism. There can be little doubt that the not distant future will see great changes in India, and the approach to freedom.

All over the world today, behind the political and economic conflicts, there is a spiritual crisis, a questioning of old values and beliefs, and a search for a way out of the tangle. In India also, perhaps more so than elsewhere, there is this crisis of the spirit, for the roots of Indian culture still go down deep into the ancient soil, and though the future beckons, the past holds back. The old culture offers no solution of modern problems: the capitalist West, which shone so brightly in the nineteenth century, has lost its glamour, and seems to be inextricably involved in its own contradictions; the new civilization being built up in the Soviet countries attracts, in spite of some dark patches, and offers hope and world peace, and a prospect of ending the misery and exploitation of millions. It may be that India will resolve this crisis of the spirit by turning more and more to this new order, but, when she does so, it will be in her own way, making the structure fit in with the genius of her people.

10. On 17 September 1934 Mahatma Gandhi announced his intention to retire from the Congress on the grounds that spinning and khadi were not regarded by all as an integral part of the programme and that many subscribed to nonviolence as a policy and not as a creed.

34. To the Editor, Manchester Guardian¹

Sir,

I have just seen the statement issued by the Bengal Government in regard to the reference to me in their Administration Report to which I

1. 9 January 1936. *Manchester Guardian*, 13 January 1936.

had taken exception.² I am glad that they have thought it fit to express their regret and to withdraw the passage in question. I must express my appreciation of this and my gratitude to them for it.

In the course of the Bengal Government's statement, reference is made to a speech I delivered in Calcutta two years ago³ and to the possible inferences that might be drawn from it. May I make clear what I said then? I stated that the national movement had grown so strong in its challenge to the existing order that the British Government sought to make every kind of effective activity illegal. An authoritarian government never likes any organised activity which is independent of it or which does not fit in with its own scheme of things. When opposition to it grows in strength, fear seizes it and it suspects every activity which touches the masses and tries to suppress it, even though that activity is wholly non-political. A kind of nervous breakdown follows and the government, being authoritarian and all-powerful, makes illegal all public activities that it does not like. This applies inevitably to the political movement, but also to economic, social and other movements. All these therefore hover continually on the verge of illegality, for new laws are promulgated overnight by decree. As an instance of the lengths to which the government in India was going, I mentioned that every approach to the masses, urban or rural, for the most innocent of purposes, was stopped. People going to the villages were arrested even before they had said or done anything. Even the Harijan movement, which was purely one of social reform and was neither political nor anti-government, had in some places come into conflict with the authorities. To my knowledge Harijan workers had been stopped from going to the villages to carry on their work and in some instances had actually been arrested. On another occasion I mentioned that in view of this authoritarian and neurotic state of the government's mind, I felt sure that any popular non-official movement, aiming at the greater use of soap by the masses, would be suspect in official eyes and would come into conflict with the government.

Yours etc.,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. On 7 January 1936, the Bengal Government in a statement apologised for publishing what was a mere "inference" in a report which was intended only to give an accurate picture of current events and agreed to delete the passage from all copies under its control. For Jawaharlal's objection to the passage see also items 29, 30 and 42 in this section.

3. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 91-94.

35. The Congress and Socialism¹

I have been told that the Congress Socialist Party is holding a conference this month at Meerut² and I have been asked to send it greetings. I do so gladly.

The members of the party will not expect me to discuss from a far country the immediate issues that agitate the mind of our people. I am not yet in a position to do so. I can only qualify myself for approval or criticism after closer touch with my colleagues of the Congress and full discussion with them. I cannot of course retain a blank mind on vital issues affecting our country, but to give a concrete opinion requires more intimate knowledge of the exact situations and human material than I claim to possess at present. I may not therefore consider in this message the detailed programme of the Congress Socialist Party, so far as I have come to know it.

Nevertheless I desire to send the conference and its members my good wishes and greetings. The Congress Socialist Party, as its very name implies, stands for the Congress and for socialists. For twenty years or more I have been closely associated with the Congress and have worked for it to the best of my ability, till I have come to consider myself almost as having merged into it. I have given the best part of my life to it because I believed that it was working for the ideals that I had in my heart. Inevitably, therefore, the Congress occupies a great part of my being and the ties that bind me to it are hard as steel. I have also progressively accepted the ideology of a scientific socialism and I may claim to be now a socialist in the full sense of the term. Any organisation that claims to represent these two ideas and ways must therefore have my goodwill, quite apart even from the detailed programme it might advance. I find further that many of my old colleagues whose opinions I have valued are now in the ranks of the Congress Socialist Party.

I have mentioned the two ways that have moved me, and I take it that they move also, in varying degrees, many of my countrymen. These are: nationalism and political freedom as represented by the Congress and social freedom as represented by socialism. Socialism, it is obvious, includes political freedom, for without that there can be no social and

1. Message to the All India Congress Socialist Conference at Meerut, 13 January 1936. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 16 January 1936.

2. The meeting was on 19 and 20 January 1936.

economic freedom. But India being unhappily still politically a subject country, nationalism is the dominant urge of most of her politically-minded classes. That is a factor of primary importance and any socialist who ignores it does so at his peril. But no socialist need be reminded that nationalism by itself offers no solution of the vast problems that confront our country and the world; it ignores indeed the world and fails to realize that in doing so it makes an understanding of even the national position impossible. For the Indian problem is but a part of the world problem of imperialism, the two are indissolubly linked together, and that world problem is essentially an economic problem, though it has many changing faces.

To continue these two outlooks and make them an organic whole is the problem of the Indian socialist. Scientific socialism itself teaches us not to follow slavishly any dogma or any other country's example, which may have resulted from entirely different circumstances. Armed with a philosophy which reveals the inner workings of history and human relations, and with the scientific outlook to guide him, the socialist tries to solve the problems of each country in relation to its varied background and stage of economic development, and also in relation to the world. It is a hard task. But then there is no easy way.

Ideas are the essential basis for action. But behind ideas there must be the men to carry them out and the character and discipline to translate them into results. No socialist can be true to his creed or mission if he seeks satisfaction merely in brave ideas and in criticism of others who do not argue with him. That is the way of facile intellectual opportunism. He has to remember that he is no armchair politician but one working for an object—for achievement. And achievement requires character and discipline and united action and the readiness to sacrifice the individual self for the larger cause. That discipline and character have been sadly lacking in India in recent months, and the brave memory of united and effective action is almost a dream that has faded. It is for us to make that dream real again, and real in an even more fundamental sense than it was in the past, for in the future it must be built upon a clear and well understood ideology.

36. To Lord Lothian¹

Badenweiler
January 17, 1936

Dear Lord Lothian,

I have read your long letter more than once, as well as your article in the *Twentieth Century*.² I must thank you again for the trouble you took in writing to me so fully on subjects which interest and affect us all so deeply. I find some difficulty in answering you for you have covered so vast a field that an adequate answer must deal with most of the major problems of the world. That is beyond me. But I shall endeavour to touch upon certain aspects, without becoming too argumentative, and this will perhaps give you some idea of how my mind is working.

I entirely agree with you that we are in the midst of one of the most creative and changing epochs in human history. It does seem that we have reached the end of an era and are on the threshold of another. I also agree that the two ideals which are moving most intelligent and sensitive persons are: the ending of the present anarchy of sovereign states, with their hatreds, fears and conflicts, and the creation of a world order; and the socialistic ideal, aiming at "a system whereby the earth and its fruits will be exploited for the benefit of all members of the community in proportion to the services they render to it and not according to the accident of property ownership." The League of Nations, you say, represents the former ideal. I think this is true in so far as it represents a widespread sentiment. In actual practice, however, it hardly functions that way, and it represents the policies of certain great powers who have no intention of giving up their privileged positions or their absolute sovereignty and who endeavour to utilise the League to make the world safe for themselves.

Another question arises. Even if the people behind the League honestly desired the ending of the anarchy of sovereign states, or were pushed

1. J.N. Correspondence N.M.M.L. Parts of this letter were published in *India and the World*, (London, 1936), pp. 177-199, and the full text in *A Bunch of Old Letters*, (Bombay, 1958), pp. 137-151.
2. In his article and his letter to Jawaharlal of 31 December 1935, Lothian argued that the world was moving towards the twin ideals of internationalism and socialism. But as Britain was shedding her imperialism, India should initiate social and economic reforms without losing her unity which she could achieve in no way "except through constitutional means" in the 1935 Act.

by popular opinion in that direction, could they succeed in that objective without changing fundamentally the social order—without, in other words, accepting socialism? Of course they would have to shed their imperialism. The League today does not look beyond the present capitalist system; indeed it does not contemplate even an ending of imperialism. It is essentially based on the *status quo* and its chief function is to preserve it. In practice, therefore, it is actually a hindrance to the realisation of the very ideal which many people think it represents. If it is true, as I believe it is, that imperialism and the anarchy of sovereign states are inevitable developments of the present phase of capitalism, then it follows that you cannot get rid of the former without also getting rid of the latter. Thus in practice the League has little to do with its supposed ideals and even puts difficulties in the way of their realisation; but even its ideals, by themselves, are such that they lead to a blind alley. It is not surprising that it finds itself frequently involved in hopeless contradictions. It simply cannot go ahead on the basis of the *status quo* because the root of the trouble is that *status quo* both in its imperialist and social aspects. It is right and proper that the League should condemn Italian aggression in Abyssinia and try to curb it,³ but the very system which it protects and seeks to perpetuate inevitably leads to that aggression. There is no valid answer for an imperialist to Mussolini's taunt that he is doing what other imperialist powers have done before, and are doing now, though not in his particularly blatant way. It does seem rather illogical to condemn Italian bombing in East Africa and maintain a dignified silence about British bombing on the north west frontier of India.

You yourself are of opinion that the achievement of the end is not likely to be by the methods of the Covenant of the League. The League, therefore, offers little hope except in so far as it represents a vague and widespread sentiment in favour of world order and peace. It helps sometimes in mobilising that sentiment and in postponing conflict.

The two ideals you have mentioned run into each other and I do not think they can be separated. The second ideal, of socialism, indeed includes the first, and it may be said that real world order and peace will only come when socialism is realised on a world scale. It is perfectly true, as you say, that real socialism involves a profound transformation of the deeper habits of opinion and of character and this inevitably takes time. Under favourable circumstances and with the

³ On 3 October 1935 the League of Nations imposed an embargo on arms to Italy and on imports from Italy and a ban on loans and credits, but the sanctions failed and were withdrawn in July 1936.

goodwill of a large number of people concerned, these changes may be brought about within a generation. But as things are, instead of that goodwill, we have the fiercest opposition and ill will, and it is therefore likely that the period will be a much longer one. The main question for us to consider is how to create an environment and circumstances under which these deeper changes can take place. Only that will be a real step in the right direction. Under present conditions the environment is against us and instead of lessening our mutual hatreds and selfishness and acquisitiveness, which lead to conflict, actually encourages all these evil traits. It is true that in spite of this grave disadvantage some progress is made and some of us, at least, begin to challenge our old habits and opinions. But the process is very slow and it is almost counterbalanced by the growth of contrary tendencies.

Capitalism stimulated acquisitiveness and these deeper instincts which we want to get rid of now. It did much good also in its earlier stages and by raising production greatly increased the standard of living. In other ways too, it served a useful purpose and it was certainly an improvement on the stage that preceded it. But it seems to have outlived its utility and today it not only bars all progress in a socialistic direction but encourages many undesirable habits and instincts in us. I do not see how we can move along socialistic lines in a society which is based on acquisitiveness and in which the profit motive is the dominant urge. It thus becomes necessary to change the basis of this acquisitive society and to remove the profit motive, as far as we can, in order to develop new and more desirable habits and ways of thinking. That involves a complete change-over from the capitalist system.

It is true, as you state it, that the capitalist system has not created international anarchy; it merely succeeded to it. It has in the past removed or lessened actual civil war within the state, but it has intensified the conflict of classes, which has grown to such an extent as to threaten civil war in the future. In the international sphere it has perpetuated anarchy on a bigger scale and, instead of petty local wars, it has brought about vast and terrible national conflicts. And so, though it does not create this anarchy, it inevitably increases it and cannot put an end to it unless it puts an end to itself. It has produced the modern imperialisms which not only crush and exploit large parts of the earth's surface and vast numbers of people, but also come into continual conflict with each other.

It may be that Marx overstates the case for the materialist or economic interpretation of history. Perhaps he did so for the simple reason that it had been largely ignored, or at any rate very much understated till then. But Marx never denied the influence of other factors on the

shaping of events. He laid the greatest stress on one—the economic factor. Whether that stress was a little overdone does not make much difference. The fact remains, I think, that his interpretation of history is the only one which does explain history to some extent and gives it meaning. It helps us to understand the present and it is quite remarkable how many of his predictions have come true.

How will socialism come? You say that it is not likely to be achieved by the universal nationalisation of the instruments of production and distribution. Must it not involve the ending of the profit and acquisitive motive and the replacement of it by a communal and cooperative motive? And does it not involve the building up of a new civilisation on a different basis from that of the present? It may be that a great deal of private initiative is left; in some matters, cultural etc., it must be left. But in all that counts, in a material sense, nationalisation of the instruments of production and distribution seems to be inevitable. There may be half-way houses to it, but one can hardly have two contradictory and conflicting processes going on side by side. The choice must be made and for one who aims at socialism there can be only one choice.

I think it is possible, in theory, to establish socialism by democratic means, provided of course the full democratic process is available. In practice, however, there are likely to be very great difficulties, because the opponents of socialism will reject the democratic method when they see their power threatened. The rejection of democracy does not or should not come from the socialist side but from the other. That of course is fascism. How is this to be avoided? The democratic method has many triumphs to its credit, but I do not know that it has yet succeeded in resolving a conflict about the very basic structure of the state or of society. When this question arises, the group or class which controls the state-power does not voluntarily give it up because the majority demands it. We have seen enough examples of this in post-war Europe and in the decline of democracy itself. Obviously no socialist transformation can be brought about without the goodwill, or at least the passive acquiescence, of the great majority.

Coming to Britain and India, I find a large number of assumptions in your letter which I think have little justification. As I do not agree with many of your premises, I also find myself in disagreement with some of your conclusions. You say that "Britain is shedding the old imperialism and is actively concerned with trying to find the way to prevent the anarchy involved in universal national self-determination from ending in fresh wars or in a new deluge of imperialism." I am afraid I fail to see entirely that Britain is acting in this role. I do not

see any shedding of the old imperialism, but only repeated and strenuous attempts to hold on to it, and to strengthen it, though a new facade is presented to the public view in some instances. Britain certainly does not want fresh wars. She is a satisfied and surfeited power. Why should she risk what she has got? She wants to maintain the *status quo* which is eminently to her advantage. She dislikes new imperialisms because they conflict with her old imperialism and not because of any dislike of imperialism itself.

You refer also to the "constitutional road" in India. What exactly is this constitutional road? I can understand constitutional activities where there is a democratic constitution, but where there is no such thing, constitutional methods have no meaning. The word constitutional then simply means legal, and legal simply means in accordance with the wishes of an autocratic executive which can make laws and issue decrees and ordinances regardless of public opinion. What is the constitutional method in Germany or Italy today? What was this method in the India of the nineteenth century or of the early twentieth century or even now? There was no possibility of bringing about a change in India then (or now) through any constitutional apparatus which the people of India could sufficiently influence. They could only beg or revolt. The mere fact that it is impossible for the great majority of the people of India to make their will effective shows that they have no constitutional way open to them. They can either submit to something they dislike intensely or adopt other than so-called constitutional methods. Such methods may be wise or unwise, under the particular circumstances, but the question of their being constitutional or not does not arise.

Most of us, I suppose, are unable to get rid of our particular national bias and often ignore the beam in our own eyes. I realise that I must be subject to this, especially when I consider the relation of Britain and India. You will allow for that. Nevertheless I must say that nothing astonishes me so much as the way the British people manage to combine their material interests with their moral fervour; how they proceed on the irrebuttable presumption that they are always doing good to the world and acting from the highest motives, and trouble and conflict and difficulty are caused by the obstinacy and evil-mindedness of others. That presumption, as you know, is not universally accepted, and in Europe and America and Asia it is the subject of humorous comment. In India especially we may be forgiven if we reject it utterly after our experience of British rule in the past and present. To talk of democracy and constitutionalism in India, in the face of what has happened and is happening there, seems to me to distort utterly the

significance of these terms. Ruling powers and ruling classes have not been known in history to abdicate willingly. And if the teaching of history was not enough, we in India have had enough experience of hard fact.

It is true, I think, that the British ruling classes possess a certain instinct for adaptability, but when the very basis of their power is challenged there is little room for superficial adaptation. For anyone to imagine that the British Government or Parliament are kindly trustees for Indian freedom and are beneficently presiding over its development seems to me one of the most extraordinary of delusions. I believe there are many Britishers who feel kindly towards India and her people and would like to see India free, but they count for little in the shaping of policy, and even they, or most of them, think in terms of Indian freedom fitting in with British desires and interests. More freedom, greater responsibility, will come to us, we are told, as we show our fitness for it, and the test of this is how far we fit in with the British scheme of things. One almost feels like suggesting to our mentors and well-wishers in England to renew their acquaintance with Aesop's fables and especially to read afresh the story of the wolf and the lamb.

It is perfectly true that in politics, as in most other things, we cannot start with a clean slate. It is also true that life is often too complex for human logic. We have to take things as they are, whether we like them or not, and to reconcile our idealism with them. But we must move in the right direction. This means, according to you, first of all the preservation of the unity of India, and then the elimination of communalism, the control and gradual divesting of vested interests and the raising of the standard of living of the people, the development of a true Indian army, and the training of the youth of India in constructive practical work required in a democratic state. Beyond all this lies the socialistic ideal, and the general background must be such as to develop those deeper instincts and habits which are necessary for the real working of this ideal.

I suppose many of us would agree with that statement, so far as it goes, though we may word it differently and add to it, and stress some points more than others. I agree with you also that the political phase comes first; indeed without that phase there is no other phase. It may be accompanied by social changes or followed soon after by them. Personally I am perfectly prepared to accept political democracy only in the hope that this will lead to social democracy. Political democracy is only the way to the goal and is not the final objective. The real demand for it comes from a desire, sometimes unconscious, for economic changes. If these changes do not follow soon enough the

political structure is likely to be unstable. I am inclined to think that in India, circumstanced as she is today, the need for economic change is urgent and a vital political change will be inevitably accompanied or followed by substantial economic changes. In any event the political change should be such as to facilitate these social changes. If it becomes a barrier to them then it is not a desirable change or one worth having.

I am not aware of any responsible Indian who thinks in terms other than those of the unity of India. That is an essential article of our political faith and everything that we do has that for its goal. That unity, I agree, is likely to be a federal unity, but that does not mean of course anything like the federation of the new Act. That unity also is not the unity of subjection under a common yoke. It is possible that a period of chaos might result in disunity and the formation of separate states in India, but that danger seems to me very unreal. The tendency to unity is too strong all over the country.

The disruptive factors are, according to you, religion, race and language. I do not see the importance of race. Race in India became intertwined with religion and partly took the shape of caste. Hindus and Moslems do not form different races; they are essentially the same amalgam of races. Thus though there are various races, they run into one another and on the whole form a definite unit, racially and culturally. The so-called hundreds of languages of India are a favourite subject for our critics, who usually have little acquaintance with a single one of them. As a matter of fact India is linguistically singularly well-knit and it is only due to the absence of popular education that numerous dialects have grown. There are ten major languages of India which cover the entire country, except for some small tracts. These belong to the two groups—Indo-Aryan and Dravidian—and between the two there is the common background of Sanskrit. Of the Indo-Aryan languages, I suppose you know that Hindustani with its various dialects accounts for over 120 millions of people, and it is spreading. The other Indo-Aryan languages—Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi—are very closely allied to it. I am sure that whatever other difficulties we may have to face in the way of Indian unity, the language question will not be a major difficulty.

You compare the state of religion in India with that of Europe at the time of the Renaissance and the Reformation. It is true that the people of India have a definite religious outlook on life which is comparable to the outlook in Europe during the Middle Ages. Still your comparison does not go below the surface. India has never known in the whole course of her long history the religious strife that has soaked Europe in blood. The whole background of Indian religion, culture

and philosophy was one of tolerance, and even encouragement of other beliefs. Some conflict arose when Islam came, but even that was far more political than religious, although stress is always laid on the religious side. It was the conflict between the conquerors and the conquered. In spite of recent developments, I cannot easily envisage religious conflict in India on any substantial scale. The communalism of today is essentially political, economic and middle class. I imagine (but I say so without personal knowledge) that the religious bitterness in Ulster today is far more deep-seated than anywhere in India. It is a fact that one must never forget that communalism in India is a latter-day phenomenon which has grown up before our eyes. That does not lessen its significance and we may not ignore it, for it is at present a tremendous obstacle in our way and is likely to interfere with our future progress. And yet I think it is overrated and over-emphasised; it does not fundamentally affect the masses although sometimes their passions are roused. With the coming of social issues to the forefront it is bound to recede into the background. Examine the communal demands of the extreme communalists and you will find that not a single one of them has the slightest reference to the masses. The communal leaders of all groups are terribly afraid of social and economic questions and it is interesting to find them joining hands in their opposition to social progress.

British rule in India has inevitably helped in creating political unity in the country. The mere fact of common subjection was bound to result in a common desire to be rid of it. It must be remembered—a fact that is not sufficiently realised—that throughout history there has been a quite extraordinary sense of cultural and geographical unity in India, and the desire for political unity was bound to grow under modern conditions of transport and communication. Throughout the British period, however, there has been an attempt on the part of the ruling power, partly conscious and deliberate, partly unconscious, to retard this unity. That of course was only to be expected for that has been the invariable policy of all empires and ruling groups. It is interesting to read the frank expressions of opinion of high officers in India during the nineteenth century. The problem was then not very urgent but with the growth of the nationalist movement, and especially during the last thirty years, it became acute. The reaction of the British Government was to devise new methods for creating and, if possible, perpetuating these divisions. Obviously, no one can say that there was not an inherent tendency towards division in India, and with the prospect of the approach of political power, this was likely to grow. It was possible to adopt a policy to tone down this tendency; it was also possible to accentuate it. The government adopted the latter

policy and encouraged in every way every fissiparous tendency in the country. It is not possible for them or for anyone to stop the historical growth of the people, but they can and they have put checks and obstructions in the way. And the latest and most important of these are in the new Act. You commend this Act because it symbolises the unity of India. As a matter of fact it is the very reverse; it is the prelude (if it is not combated) of greater disunity. It divides up India into religious and numerous other compartments, preserves large parts of it as feudal enclaves which cannot be touched but which can influence other parts, and checks the growth of healthy political parties on social and economic issues, which you consider "the most important urgent need in India today."

The policy of the British Government on social issues is equally marked. Far from looking towards any form of socialism or control or divesting of vested interests, it has deliberately protected numerous vested interests, created fresh ones and invariably sided with the political, social and religious reactionaries in India. The new Act is again a culmination of this policy and at no time before have these vested interests and obscurantists and reactionaries had so much power as they will have under the new federal India. The Act legally bars the door to that social progress which, according to you, should be our goal, by protecting and entrenching these vested interests, foreign and Indian. Even small measures of social reform are hardly within reach as a very great part of the financial resources of the state is mortgaged and earmarked for the maintenance of the vested interests.⁴

Every country today has to put up a stiff fight against the forces of reaction and evil. India is no exception to the rule. The tragedy of the situation is that the British people, without being conscious of it, stand today through their Parliament and officials entirely on the side of the forces of evil in India. What they would not tolerate for an instant in their own country, they encourage in India. You mention the great name of Abraham Lincoln and remind me of the vital importance he attached to the union. Presumably you think that the British Government, in trying to suppress the Congress movement, was actuated by the same noble motive of maintaining the unity of India in the face of disruptive forces. I do not quite see how the unity of India

4. By the Government of India Act of 1935, expenditure on defence, ecclesiastical affairs, excluded areas, pensions to members of the higher services and other items, constituting in all a considerable portion of the federal expenditure, was made non-votable by the legislature. The Railway Board was also established "to perform its duties upon business principles and without being subject to political interference."

was threatened by that movement—indeed I think that that movement or some similar movement alone can bring about an organic unity in the country, and the British Government's activities push us in a contrary direction. But, apart from this, do you not think that the comparison of Lincoln with the attempt of an imperialist power to crush the freedom movement in a country subject to it, is very far-fetched?

You want to eradicate undesirable and selfish habits and instincts in the people. Do you think that the British in India are helping in this direction? Quite apart from their support of the reactionary elements, the background of British rule is worth considering. It is of course based on an extreme form of widespread violence and the only sanction is fear. It suppresses the usual liberties which are supposed to be essential to the growth of a people; it crushes the adventurous, the brave, the sensitive types, and encourages the timid, the opportunist and time-serving, the sneak and the bully. It surrounds itself with a vast army of spies and informers and *agents provocateurs*. Is this the atmosphere in which the more desirable virtues grow or democratic institutions flourish?

You ask me whether the Congress could at any time have established a liberal constitution for all India by consent, except by making in fundamentals the same kind of concessions to communalism, to the princes and to property. That presumes that the present Act establishes a liberal constitution by consent. If this constitution is a liberal one it is difficult for me to imagine what an illiberal constitution can be like, and as for consent, I doubt if anything that the British Government have ever done in India has been quite so much resented and disapproved of as the new Act. Incidentally, the measures to obtain the necessary consent involved the fiercest repression all over the country, and even now, as a prelude to the enforcement of the Act, all India and provincial laws suppressing all kinds of civil liberty have been passed. To talk of consent under these circumstances does seem most extraordinary. There is an amazing amount of misconception about this in England. If the problem has to be faced the dominant facts cannot be ignored.

It is true that the government has succeeded in making some arrangement with the princes and with various minority groups, but even these groups are highly dissatisfied except, to some extent, with the minor arrangements affecting their representation. Take the principal minority, the Moslems. No one can say that the aristocratic, semi-feudal and other hand-picked Moslem members of the Round Table Conference represented the Moslem masses. You may be

surprised to know that the Congress has still considerable Moslem backing.

Could the Congress have done better? I have no doubt that the nationalist movement, of which the Congress is the symbol and the principal standard bearer, could have done infinitely better. The Congress is of course a *bourgeois* organisation (I wish it was more socialistic), and therefore the property question would not have arisen in any acute form at that stage. The communal question would have had to be faced and, I think, solved for the time being at least by a large measure of consent. Probably some degree of communalism would have remained to begin with, but far less than what we are presented with under the new Act. What is more important—circumstances would have been created for the elimination of communalism in the near future and for growth along social lines; the land problem would have been tackled. The real difficulties would have been two: the vested interests of the British Government and the City of London, and the princes. The former represent the crux of the question, all else is really secondary. The princes would, under the circumstances, have adapted themselves to a considerable extent to the new situation, and the Congress, constituted as it is today, would have given them a long enough rope. The pressure of public opinion, including that of their own subjects, would have been too great for them to resist. Probably some temporary arrangement might have been made with the Indian states to begin with to enable this public opinion to come into play and shape developments. Presuming of course that the British Government is not there to back up the undiluted autocracy of the princes, there is little doubt that the states would gradually fall into line. No question of civil conflict need have arisen.

All this would have been very far from what I desire but it would at least have been a definite political and democratic step in the right direction. In the framing of a constitution or a political structure it is manifestly impossible to get every one concerned to agree. One tries to have the maximum agreement and the others, who do not agree, either fall into line according to democratic procedure, or have to be pressed or coerced into doing so. The British Government, representing the autocratic and authoritarian tradition, and chiefly bent on preserving their own interests, tried to win the consent of the princes and some other reactionary elements, and coerced the vast majority of the people. The Congress would inevitably have functioned differently.

All this is of course airy talk without substance for it ignores the principal factor—the British Government and British financial interests.

There is another consideration which deserves notice. The Congress, under Mr. Gandhi's leadership, had laid great stress on non-violence and the conversion of the adversary rather than his coercion. Quite apart from the metaphysical aspects of this doctrine and its feasibility or otherwise in the final sense, there can be no doubt that this has created a powerful feeling against civil conflict and in favour of attempting to win over various groups in India. That is a factor of great value to us in preserving the unity of India and in toning down opposition.

People discuss the noncooperation and civil disobedience movements in terms of constitutional action or otherwise. I have referred to this aspect earlier. May I put to you how they have always impressed themselves on me? Of course these movements exercised tremendous pressure on the British Government and shook the government machinery. But the real importance, to my mind, lay in the effect they had on our own people, and especially the village masses. Poverty and a long period of autocratic rule, with its inevitable atmosphere of fear and coercion, had thoroughly demoralised and degraded them. They had hardly any of the virtues that are necessary for citizenship, they were cuffed and bullied by every petty official, tax-collector, policeman, landlord's agent; they were utterly lacking in courage or the capacity for united action or resistance to oppression; they sneaked and told tales against each other; and when life became too hard they sought an escape from it in death. It was all very depressing and deplorable and yet one could hardly blame them for it; they were the victims of all-powerful circumstances. Noncooperation dragged them out of this mire and gave them self-respect and self-reliance; they developed the habit of cooperative action; they acted courageously and did not submit so easily to unjust oppression; their outlook widened and they began to think a little in terms of India as a whole; they discussed political and economic questions (crudely no doubt) in their bazaars and meeting places. The lower middle classes were affected in the same way but the change in the masses was the most significant. It was a remarkable transformation and the Congress, under Gandhi's leadership, must have the credit for it. It was something far more important than constitutions and the structure of government. It was the foundation on which only a stable structure or constitution could be built up.

All this of course involved a cataclysmic upheaval of Indian life. Usually in other countries this has involved a vast amount of hatred and violence. And yet in India, thanks to Mahatma Gandhi, there was, relatively speaking, exceedingly little of this. We developed many of the virtues of war without its terrible evils. And the real organic unity

of India was brought far nearer than it had ever been. Even the religious and communal differences toned down. You know that the most vital question which affects rural India, which means eighty five per cent of India, is the land question. Any such upheaval in another country, together with the terrible economic depression, would have resulted there in *jacqueries*. It is extraordinary that India escaped them. That was not because of government repression but because of Gandhi's teaching and the message of the Congress.

The Congress thus released all the live forces in the country and suppressed the evil and disruptive tendencies. It did so in a peaceful, disciplined and as civilised a way as was possible under the circumstances, though inevitably there were risks in such a mass release. How did the government react? You know that well enough. By trying to crush those live and virile forces and encouraging all the evil and disruptive tendencies, and doing so in the most uncivilised way. The British Government has functioned in a purely fascist way in India during the past six years, and the only difference has been that it did not take open pride in this fact as the fascist countries do.

This letter has become terribly long and I do not want now to consider the new constitution Act in detail. That is hardly necessary for the Act has been analysed and criticised by a host of persons in India holding all sorts of opinions, but agreeing in one thing—their utter disapproval of the Act. Very recently one of the most eminent leaders of the Indian liberals described the new constitution privately as “the quintessence of the most venomous opposition to all our national aspirations.” Is it not remarkable that even our moderate politicians should think so and yet you, with all your broad sympathy for Indian aspirations, should approve of it and say that it “involves the transfer of the citadel of power in India to Indian hands”? Is the gulf between our ways of thinking so vast? Why is it so? It almost becomes more of a problem in psychology than in politics or economics.

The psychological aspect is after all very important. Is it realised in England what the past few years have meant to India? How the attempt to crush human dignity and decency, the injuries to the soul more even than to the body, have left a lasting impress on the Indian people? Never have I realised so well how a tyrannical use of power degrades those who use it as well as those who suffer from it. How can we forget it without forgetting everything that is decent and honourable? How can we forget it when it continues from day to day? Is this the prelude to freedom and the transfer of the citadel of power?

People react in different ways to oppression. Some are broken, others harden. We have both kinds in India as elsewhere. Many of us cannot desert our colleagues, who suffer in prison or otherwise, whatever the consequences might be to our individual selves. Many of us cannot tolerate an insult to Gandhi, whether we differ from him or not, for Gandhi represents to us the honour of India. No one in his senses likes conflict and suffering and the way of catastrophe. The Indian national movement has done all in its power to avoid this way, without at the same time giving up the very basis of its existence. But it is the British Government that has proceeded along that path and made a peaceful solution more and more difficult. If it imagines that by merely persisting in this direction it will succeed, it seems to have strangely misread both the lesson of history and the present temper of the Indian people. If catastrophe is to be avoided, it will have to be for the British Government to retrace its steps.

Please forgive me for the length of this letter.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

37. Mahatma Gandhi¹

Mr. Saumyendranath Tagore² is one of our young comrades in India for whom I have the greatest respect. Ardent, clear-headed, and devoted to the cause of the freedom of the masses, anything that he says or writes must deserve attention. But I have seen with great regret the criticism of Gandhi which he has written in a recent book.³ All legitimate criticism is to be welcomed, for it helps us to get at the truth, and no personality, however great, should be above this criticism. But it seems to me that Mr. Tagore has done an injustice to himself and has failed to grasp many of the underlying factors of the Indian situation in his eagerness to paint Gandhi as a reactionary force in

1. Badenweiler, 20 January 1936. First published in *L'Europe*, 1936. Reprinted in *India and the World*, (London, 1936), pp. 172-176.
2. (1901-1974); Indian delegate to the Sixth Communist International, 1928; founder, Revolutionary Communist Party of India; author of *Communism and Fetishism and Tactics and Strategy of Revolution*.
3. *Gandhi*, published in 1934.

every way. It is not possible for me in these lines to consider many of Mr. Tagore's statements which I think are wrong. But, as one who has differed from Gandhi in many important matters and yet cooperated with him in a large measure, I should like to express my disagreement with Mr. Tagore's basic analysis of Gandhi.

It should be remembered that the nationalist movement in India, like all nationalist movements, was essentially a *bourgeois* movement. It represented the natural historical stage of development, and to consider it or to criticize it as a working-class movement is wrong. Gandhi represented that movement and the Indian masses in relation to that movement to a supreme degree, and he became the voice of the Indian people to that extent. He functioned inevitably within the orbit of nationalist ideology, but the dominating passion that consumed him was a desire to raise the masses. In this respect he was always ahead of the nationalist movement, and he gradually made it, within the limits of its own ideology, turn in this direction. Economic events in India and the world powerfully pushed Indian nationalism towards vital social changes, and today it hovers, somewhat undecided, on the brink of a new social ideology.

But the main contribution of Gandhi to India and the Indian masses has been through the powerful movements which he launched through the National Congress. Through nation-wide action he sought to mould the millions, and largely succeeded in doing so, and changing them from a demoralized, timid, and hopeless mass, bullied and crushed by every dominant interest, and incapable of resistance, into a people with self-respect and self-reliance, resisting tyranny, and capable of united action and sacrifice for a larger cause. He made them think of political and economic issues, and every village and every bazaar hummed with argument and debate on the new ideas and hopes that filled the people. That was an amazing psychological change. The time was ripe for it, of course, and circumstances and world conditions worked for this change. But a great leader is necessary to take advantage of circumstances and conditions. Gandhi was that leader, and he released many of the bonds that imprisoned and disabled our minds, and none of us who experienced it can ever forget that great feeling of release and exhilaration that came over the Indian people. Gandhi has played a revolutionary role in India of the greatest importance because he knew how to make the most of the objective conditions and could reach the heart of the masses; while groups with a more advanced ideology functioned largely in the air because they did not fit in with those conditions and could therefore not evoke any substantial response from the masses.

To call Gandhi an ally of British imperialism is the veriest nonsense which can only evoke a smile. The answer to that charge can best be given by the British Government and by British imperialists, who have all along considered him their most dangerous opponent. They have tried to suppress him and oppose him in every way, and the measure of their reaction to him and to the National Congress is the wide-flung and intensive repression that is going on in India.

It is perfectly true that Gandhi, functioning on the nationalist plane, does not think in terms of the conflict of classes, and tries to compose their differences. But the action he has indulged in and taught the people has inevitably raised mass consciousness tremendously and made social issues vital. And his insistence on the raising of the masses at the cost, wherever necessary, of vested interests has given a strong orientation to the national movement in favour of the masses.

Essentially, the Congress under Gandhi's leadership has been a joint anti-imperialist front. Mr. Tagore in his book does not believe in the desirability of such a united front. But I should be surprised if he has not changed his opinion since he wrote his book, for, as everyone knows, the policy of the Comintern and the communist parties in different countries has undergone a great change in recent months in favour of a united front.⁴ In France there is the *Front Populaire*, in England the Communist Party wants to cooperate with the Labour Party, and in the colonial countries there is the definite attempt at cooperation with nationalist movements. In India itself, so far as I know, they are in favour of a joint anti-imperialist front.

Gandhi and the Congress must be judged by the policies they pursue and the action they indulge in. But behind this, personality counts and colours those policies and activities. In the case of a very exceptional person like Gandhi the question of personality becomes especially important in order to understand and appraise him. An English journalist, Mr. George Slocombe, who has had a wide experience of men prominent and otherwise in public affairs all over the world, has referred to Gandhi in a recent book of his, and the passage is interesting and worth quoting. He says: "I have never met any man more utterly honest, more transparently sincere, less given to egotism, self-conscious pride, opportunism and ambition which are found in greater or less degree in all the other great political figures of the world." An English journalist's

4. At the seventh Comintern Congress held in August 1935, the strategy of collaboration with the national movements in the colonies was advocated. In accordance with this the British Communist Party called upon the Communist Party of India to ally itself with the Congress Socialist Party and infiltrate into the Indian National Congress.

opinion need not carry much weight with us, nor does the sincerity of a person excuse a wrong policy or mistaken ideas. But as it happens, that opinion is shared by millions in India, and it is very superficial criticism to dispose of such a unique and outstanding personality by cheap and well-worn phrases which are applied indiscriminately to the average politician. We in India have often differed from Gandhi, we differ from him still in many ways, and sometimes we may follow different paths, but it has been the greatest privilege of our lives to work with him and under him for a great cause. To us he has represented the spirit and honour of India, the yearning of her sorrowing millions to be rid of their innumerable burdens, and an insult to him by the British Government or others has been an insult to India and her people.

38. Interview on His Second Visit to London¹

Question: How is Mrs. Nehru now?

Jawaharlal Nehru: Well, my wife is, I think, slightly better. But I believe before I leave London she will be removed to Lausanne, where I will go from this place on the 6th February.

Q: What is your immediate programme?

JN: I am ignorant of it in as much as it is Miss Ellen Wilkinson, Mr. Krishna Menon and a few other personal friends who are responsible for arranging it.

Q: Would you advise your countrymen to accept ministerial posts under the new Government of India Act?

JN: I cannot say anything on the subject until I reach India and hold consultations with my colleagues.

Q: May we congratulate you?

1. 26 January 1936. From *The Tribune*, 8 February 1936.

JN: I do not know why you are congratulating me. If you think my wife is better you are mistaken, if the congratulations are for the recent statement of the Bengal Government then.....

A correspondent: No Panditji, I congratulate you on your being elected President of the Congress. We have this news in today's newspapers.

JN: Oh, I see, but that is news to me. News concerning me seems to travel quicker to you than to me. I have no official intimation from the Congress Committee on my reported election. From what I know of it, the election could not have taken place by now and I think I am right that the congratulations are a bit premature.

39. On the 1935 Act¹

Question: When you meet the leaders of different parties in this country, what do you propose to tell them?

Jawaharlal Nehru: It depends upon their questions and what they say to me. I have nothing special to say to them. I shall be very glad to meet them, not with any desire to get anything out of them. But it is always good to have personal contacts with intelligent people.

Q: Do you agree with British public opinion that the passing of the new Government of India Act solves the Indian question? If you do not share that view, would you tell us the magnitude of the Indian problem?

JN: The question is so vast that I have a feeling that even the so-called experts in Parliament on India are stupid in their knowledge of India. The real difficulty arises from one point. People in Britain start with entirely different premises from what we do in India. Inevitably we argue and we go on and on, on parallel lines. The problem as we see it is entirely different from the problem as they in Britain

1. Interview to the press in London, 27 January 1936. From *The Tribune*, 8 February 1936.

see it. Your people talk in terms of communities, castes, languages as the background of the Indian problem. Well, it is very extraordinary how people like even the Secretary of State for India are utterly ignorant of conditions in India. Inevitably they go in wrong channels. It is so difficult to change their background.

Q: What do you think of the new Government of India Act?

JN: To me the Government of India Act is trivial because it does not touch a single problem of India. One of the biggest problems of India is unemployment. It is a tremendous problem—the rural class unemployment is appallingly high. You have no conception of it. I cannot estimate figures because millions are completely unemployed and scores of millions are partly employed. The old problem of unemployment is increasing. It began in its present form with almost the coming of the British, with the suppression of old forms of industry and introduction of new forms of modern industry. You cannot imagine the burden on the land. It is too great. The people cannot simply bear it. This problem of unemployment cannot be tackled through the new constitution. In the present conditions of India, it is desirable from economic and psychological points of view to solve this problem immediately.

The Congress or any other party in India is out to realise a certain ideal, not necessarily a political objective. They want to raise the standard of living and solve such other allied problems. How far they can do so effectively under the new constitution is the test of the usefulness of the Act. The two important problems which face India are the land problem and the industrial problem. They cannot tackle these problems under the new constitution. We cannot move even our little finger to solve these problems. Under the present Act, and I mean the new one, every single vested interest is protected, it cannot be touched by any democratic council or assembly. The city of London, the British Government, the interests of Indian landlords, the Indian princes and even the interest of the Scottish Presbyterian Church in India are safeguarded under the constitution.

When there is no democratic outlet the question of working a constitution does not arise. A constitution presupposes a democratic constitution. In India the word "constitution" is used freely and simply to mean what is legal for the time being, it means what the Viceroy thinks overnight and issues in the form of an ordinance the following morning. Take it from me that the term "constitutional activity" is incorrectly applied in India. This distinction might be remembered.

The only question is whether you break the law or not. The talk of reaching self-government step by step, by precedents etc., is all nonsense. When you talk of a democratic constitution this question never comes in. You don't call that a constitution which talks in such terms. There is no section of really political opinion in India—I include in this even the most moderate politically inclined people—which has not criticised the new constitution and condemned it in no uncertain language. Nobody has accepted the constitution and even the Right Hon. Srinivasa Sastri has criticised it in very strong language. Of course, he may say that the Indians may adopt certain tactics to meet the situation. But one thing is certain and definite. Nobody in India today is thinking in terms of this constitution because everyone is agreed that it gives nothing. This constitution cannot be worked and you cannot get anything out of it. The question is how to oppose it. I cannot say how we will oppose it. It is highly likely that the Congressmen will put up candidates but it is taken for granted that they will put up candidates and contest elections in order to oppose the constitution. Those who talk of taking office and accepting ministerial posts will do so to oppose the constitution.

The Government of India Act is essentially an Act which converts and mortgages India completely to a number of vested interests—the main interests being the city of London and the British Government. The new federal constitution converts India into a magnified Indian state.

Q: What do you mean by “direct action”?

JN: When they—the Congressmen—talk of direct action, it does not involve any violent action as in Europe. The mentality of direct action is there, perhaps more than it has been in the past. But I do not think it is an immediate issue. This mentality is due to the fact that the background of the government is the continuance and consistent repression of civil liberty of the people in India even in normal times. Under the present normal conditions existing in India several thousands have been detained in jail, sentenced for sedition from day to day, and certain parts of the country are known for the suppression of every kind of civil liberty. Today in normal times, labour and trade union organisations have been banned in several parts of the country. The recently enacted Criminal Law Amendment Act, in the teeth of opposition of the elected Assembly even, almost interferes with the private life of individuals. This Act is hardly a promising good beginning for the so-called generous measure of the new reforms.

If the Criminal Law Amendment Act is passed because of communalism, communism and terrorism, do you not think that it is the final condemnation of the British Government in India not to be able to govern without such an apparatus? They have in that case utterly failed to govern. In my opinion terrorism is a kind of infantile political vanity. Excited youths want to do something because they cannot put up with existing conditions. Real terrorists are not frightened by laws. It is almost impossible to stop a real terrorist from his mad acts. He knows he is playing with his life. He is not to be frightened by oppressive and punitive methods as he is prepared to put his life at stake.

Q: Could you explain the communal problem of India?

JN: The communal problem is not a religious problem, it has almost nothing to do with religion. It is partly an economic problem, and partly a middle class problem in a largely political sense. It practically came into existence in the last 25 or 30 years. It grew specially in the last 15 years or so. But remember there is far more religious bitterness in northern Ireland than there is in India. Not one of the communal groups touches the problem of the masses. They are all interested in the problem of jobs. They want to get more jobs. The idea of power coming in the hands of the people under constitutional acts has led middle class people to think in terms of getting spoils, getting patronage. I do not think it is a very difficult problem to solve. If social and economic issues come to the front the communal problem falls into the background. My outlook is economic whereas yours—I mean of the British political leaders—is political. There cannot be a simple solution of the complicated problem of India. The balance of social forces from time to time has got to be recognised. Since the Congress came on the scene, the Indian peasantry is influencing the Congress which is no doubt controlled by the middle class. As an organisation it has no consistent economic philosophy but it is tending to divide on economic and nationalist lines—the left and right wings of the Congress. A few years ago the Congress passed a resolution on social reforms.² You may call it a weak and watery approach to socialism but that was the first approach. My personal attitude is, to put it briefly, a socialist attitude. How to apply it to India depends on many factors and on time. It depends on the peasantry and other forces. The stronger the force the more radical it is likely to be. Take, for instance, the land problem

2. At the Karachi session in 1931.

of India. It can only be solved by collectivism. Any land reform involves expropriation with or without compensation. In order to have a peaceful settlement of the problem one ought to be careful in the matter of compensation but the compensation cannot be in full because the resources of the country will not permit full compensation.

Q: What is the attitude of the Bengal Nationalists to the Communal Award?

JN: The Award of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald hits Bengal very hard. Therefore a number of Congressmen in Bengal feel that they cannot possibly accept the Award or even the resolution of the Congress on it. The Award wipes out in Bengal the whole political Hindu class, the whole of the intelligentsia is wiped out under it. Although the Congress attitude to it is most statesmanlike and correct, I cannot complain of the attitude adopted by the Bengal Hindus.

To conclude, I would say the first item on the Congress programme is to put an end to the new Government of India Act.

40. On a Common Script for India¹

I welcome the formation of the Association and urge its members to carry on their work, independent of the Congress, and justify its existence by solid work. I agree with its objects and congratulate the members for contemplating the holding of a convention during the same week as the Congress session in Lucknow. You need not be deterred by the so-called multitude of languages of India. Actually India is a most unified area, considered from the linguistic viewpoint.

I am much interested in having a common script for the Indo-Dravidian languages and welcome the suggestion of adopting the Latin script which would bring India closer to the outside world.

1. Address to the Indian Progressive Writers Association, London, 28 January 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 29 January 1936.

41. No Compromise with Imperialism¹

In India there is a feeling of disillusion about the so-called left-wing groups in Britain. In my view there is nothing to choose between the three political parties, all of which represent imperialism in varying degrees.

If imperialism goes from England there will undoubtedly be the closest cooperation between Britain and India. We will explore the various methods and a programme to squash the new Government of India Act. I am, however, not prepared to accept any compromise with any imperialistic government.

1. Speech at a meeting in the Committee Room of the House of Commons, London, 29 January 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 31 January 1936.

42. Interview to the Press¹

Question: Are you satisfied with the apology, as it has been termed, of the Bengal Government?

Jawaharlal Nehru: So far as I am personally concerned I want to consider the matter as closed. However, in India there is consensus of opinion which feels that not only further agitation should be carried on for an unequivocal expression of regret on the part of the Bengal Government, but steps should also be taken immediately to demand the withdrawal of the Government of India's Annual Report issued during the week.

Q: What about the comments on the Report which has been described as the India Government's attempt at propaganda pamphleteering?

JN: I cannot say anything on the subject as I have not seen the Government of India's Report nor can I change my mind so far as the Bengal Government is concerned.

1. London, 29 January 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 12 February 1936.

Q: What change do you envisage in land reforms?

JN: There must be a radical change in the whole land system of India. But, in my opinion, that is not possible so long as the imperialist structure of the Government of India remains.

Q: What is the role of khaddar in the national movement?

JN: I am of the opinion that khaddar has played a very important part in the national movement of the country. But taking a long distance view I do not think khaddar can survive. I really cannot envisage how we can separate even India from the rest of the world, which have adopted modern industrial methods. None the less, I am satisfied that khaddar will help the country as a side industry, though it can never compete successfully.

Q: What would be your policy for India, if India comes strongly under Japanese economic influence?

JN: Under present conditions in India some measure of protection will be necessary for the Indian industries.

Q: What about the external danger to India in the absence of British rule?

JN: Why talk of this? Why not analyse the situation? It depends, first of all, on conditions under which India attains her freedom, whether by compulsion and force or whether by an agreement with Britain. If it is a friendly parting with Britain then the situation is different. But suppose we part company by forcing Britain then it presupposes that we are strong enough to look after ourselves. It is not very easy for Japan to think of planning a conquest of India. Japan can only think in terms of conquest of India when she has finished consuming China. I cannot conceive of any Japanese military danger to India for a very long time. If Japan could undertake the conquest of India then most of the European countries might have been squashed by now. But they have not been because of the balance of power that governs the situation. Fundamentally, in my opinion, Japan is a weakening power. She has no background in her way of living and cannot go on for long. She is utterly isolated.

Q: What about Russia—don't you think Russia might plan a conquest of India?

JN: Oh, Lord, I think Russia is a great friend and not a menace to India. As a matter of fact, India has suffered in the past from the rivalries of the imperialist power of Great Britain with other powers. We have merely become a shield for British imperialism. Before the Russian revolution and establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the rivalry between England and Russia was not so much a menace to India as it was for Britain; but we suffered in the bargain. And today Russia is, it is admitted all round, a country least desiring any wars or aggressions as she is concentrating more and more on her own development. She may, of course, want social changes in other countries but it is absolutely inconceivable to think of her becoming a menace to India. Let us remember that Russia and India are both producers of raw material. So there is no economic need for Russia to go to India as it is for Great Britain. My complaint today, if I may so suggest, is that Russia at the present moment has become very conservative. She wants the *status quo*, which I do not like. Her whole outlook is so radically changed. And she knows that any attempt on her part to invade India would involve her in a big war. She does not overlook that Japan is there still in the East.

Q: Do you feel the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was in the right direction?

JN: In theory, I think it was very bad. I do not like the clauses of that Pact. They have led to so many misinterpretations, misreadings and miscalculations. We assumed so many things but the authorities read the clauses in a different way. However, the actual idea of having the Pact was, I think, a desirable thing.

43. On Conditions in India¹

I would like to impress on the British public the fact that various civil liberties in India are suppressed.

1. At a conference of delegates from Indian and British organisations interested in Indian affairs at Caxton Hall, London, 1 February 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 3 February 1936.

It is suggested that a central organization should be formed in India to supply authentic reports to organizations in England to enable them to fulfil their objects.

However, I would like to point out that organizations abroad cannot be affiliated to the Congress and urge that the name of the Congress should not be used as it might compromise the Congress.

I do not attach great importance to Dr. Ambedkar's change of faith² because his faith was not of the faithful kind. A leader like Dr. Ambedkar represents the upper strata of the depressed class, who are economically better off. They are entering into competition and seeking jobs in their desire to share the spoils. The real underdog and the depressed are represented by Mahatma Gandhi rather than the non-Congress sections who want to make the depressed class depressed for ever by agreeing to a separate electorate for them.

2. At Poona in January 1936, Ambedkar declared that he was determined on conversion from Hinduism.

44. On His Election as President of the Congress¹

I am most grateful to my countrymen for electing me for the second time to the Congress presidentship. At any time that would have been a great honour. At present, when India and the world have to face vital problems and any decisions we may take will have far-reaching consequences, that is a signal mark of confidence. But greater even than honour and confidence is the responsibility that is cast on me, and I confess it somewhat overwhelms me. For several years I have been cut off from taking an active part in our national movement and I have watched the passing events as a distant and passive spectator.

I have not met most of my colleagues nor have I had the opportunity to confer with them. That increases the responsibility and difficulties I have to face. I shall shoulder the burden and trust those who have honoured me with their confidence will share it with me, so that the Congress may carry on worthily, as it has done in the past, the struggle for Indian independence and freedom of our masses. In the world today

1. Statement to the press, London, 1 February 1936. *The Tribune*, 2 February 1936.

everywhere the forces of freedom and progress have to face powerful combinations of forces of reaction and vested interests. In India also we have the same conflicts, and imperialism, with its satellites, prevents our progress. To that the Congress will continue, I am sure, to present a joint anti-imperialist front and will range itself with the progressive forces of the world, and thus help in realising our national and social freedom and a better world order. I hope to return to India in time to consult my colleagues before the Congress session meets at Lucknow.

45. Speech at a Labour Party Reception¹

Madame Chairman² and Comrades,

The honour and the appreciation that you have shown tonight is, I am aware, not so much for an individual as for the cause which he represents. And those words of different speakers did mirror the affection and goodwill that I carry from here and I am deeply grateful to all of you. I assure Professor Laski that there are thousands of men and women in India, whose names you may not have heard or are not likely to hear, who deserve to be compared with men like Tom Mooney,³ Dimitroff⁴ and Ernst Thaelmann.⁵ I should like you to remember that because of certain circumstances you might have heard of my name, my name which might have achieved notoriety, but there are hundreds and thousands in India who can be mentioned with those great men and not me. I do wish you to think not in terms of individuals like me but in a measure of a few thousands who are suffering from day to day.

1. Caxton Hall, London, 3 February 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 17 February 1936.

2. Miss Ellen Wilkinson presided over the reception.

3. (1883-1942); American labour leader who was sentenced to death for alleged participation in the bomb killings at San Francisco parade in 1916; the sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment; pardoned and released in 1939.

4. (1882-1949); Bulgarian communist leader; arrested in 1933 for alleged complicity in the Reichstag arson case but later acquitted; acquired Soviet citizenship and served as the secretary general of the Comintern, 1934-43; Prime Minister of Bulgaria, 1946-49.

5. (b. 1886); chairman of the German communist party from 1925; arrested by the Nazis in 1933 and detained without trial; shot in a concentration camp in 1944.

Many people imagine that the Indian problem is settled or that they have had enough of it, and would like to get rid of it. Perhaps it is a natural reaction with them. But obviously you, who are present here and have probably taken some interest in Indian affairs, must know that the Indian problem is not only not solved but truly it is a far graver and difficult problem than it had been in the past few years. The problem has become far more bitter and difficult after the Parliamentary farce of the new India Act. It is impossible to have an agreed solution of the problem between England and India as England stands today. It is impossible for imperialist England and nationalist India to agree on anything. The only solution is the elimination of imperialism in India and in Britain the elimination will be inevitable. The relation of Britain and India is in the nature of British aristocracy on the one hand and Indian proletariat on the other, for even the working class of Britain forms part of the aristocracy so far as India is concerned. What I mean is this. Taking England as a whole, it is a kind of upper class and we of India as a whole are a kind of proletariat. The Congress is fundamentally a joint front against British imperialism and so long as British imperialism lasts the Congress can only talk in terms of Indian independence. However, even those who are socialists in India do not admire the idea of cultivating any intense form of nationalism. I do not think there can be any healthy basis of cooperation between imperialist Britain and subject India. But, in spite of all the years of horrors that we have undergone, I may tell you that there is an amazing amount of goodwill; the bitterness is not deep-rooted amongst the people. Our bitterness is against the system that governs us and not against the people of Britain. That is indeed a desirable factor in India for us all.

I must emphasise one fact and that is this. Whenever India attains her freedom it will be obviously through Indian efforts and not by outside effort. Fundamentally the problem of India, whether economic or social, depends upon the Indian people. Time must come, it cannot be delayed, when this problem will have to be settled. But the new India Act is not going to settle it. The India Act is a constant reminder for irritation, it can never be a signal for peace. On the contrary, it must inevitably lead to conflicts in India, but still with this background of goodwill on both sides a time will come when we can still make friends and be friends. The psychological background in India is intense bitterness, which extends even to the most moderate sections of the Indian people, because we are always conscious that we in India are in a vast prison that is India itself. I must take this opportunity to refer to that great countryman of mine, the one who is today one of the bravest soliders

of Indian freedom, I mean Abdul Ghaffar Khan. He is not only one of the finest, bravest and most gifted men of India, but he is an embodiment of Indian unity. Do you know that Abdul Ghaffar Khan's mere word is more than half of British military strength in the North West Frontier Province in solving the problem of that place? The frontier question can be settled quickly by Gandhi and Abdul Ghaffar Khan. But the repression of British imperialism in India finds this man, as it finds so many others, in prison. For that reason the real thought of India, my real thought, is not the constitutional Act but something different. I think in terms of the land problem, social services, health, uplifting of the toiling masses, and for that goal I shall toil by treating the new Act as a trivial thing.

46. On the Indian Problem¹

Mr. Chairman and Friends,

First of all may I point out that, although I happen to be elected the President of the next session of the Indian National Congress, I do not speak in any such capacity but entirely on my own behalf. In any event I should not have been able to speak as President of the Congress, but that is especially so because I have been really cut off from my colleagues and the leaders of the Congress movement in India for a number of years, and it is difficult for me to get into touch with living currents of thought in India without being in that country for some time.

These questions that have been framed are fairly comprehensive.² One could say a great deal about them or deal with them briefly. I suppose it would be best if I tried to deal with them fairly briefly, because there is not very much time at our disposal this afternoon, and I shall try (although I am not likely to succeed) to say only that which is pertinent to the subjects dealt with in the questions.

1. Discussion with the India Conciliation Group, at its meeting on 4 February 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 16, 21, 26, 27 May and 1 June 1936. Reprinted in *India and The World*, (London, 1936), pp. 226-262.

2. The questions were put by Carl Heath, the chairman.

Question: Will you outline what is meant by the term "complete independence for India"?

Jawaharlal Nehru: Presumably the reference is to this phrase occurring in the first Article of the Congress constitution.³ Therein it refers, I take it, to the political side only and not to the economic side. Of course, the Congress as a whole is beginning to think on economic lines also and otherwise develop its economic policy, and some of us, including myself, think much more on the lines of economic freedom than on the lines of political freedom. Obviously economic freedom includes political freedom. But, defining this phrase simply in its political sense, as it occurs in the Congress constitution, it means national freedom, not only domestic but foreign, financial, military, i.e., control of the military and control of foreign affairs; in other words, whatever national freedom usually signifies. That does not mean necessarily that we lay stress on an isolation of India or a breaking away of India from such associations as might exist with England or with other countries, but it does mean—the word "independence" is used specially to lay stress on the fact—that we want to break the imperialist connection with Britain. If imperialism survives in England, we must part from England, because so long as imperialism survives in England, the only connection between England and India is likely to be the connection of an imperialist domination in India in some form or other. It may become vaguer and vaguer; it may become less obvious than it is; it may even not be obvious on the political side and yet be very powerful on the economic side. Therefore in terms of imperialist Britain the independence of India means the separation of India from England. Personally I can conceive and welcome the idea of a close association between India and England on terms other than those of imperialism.

Q: Do you recognize the need for an intermediate period of transition, and, if so, does the India Act in any way meet this? If not, what are the next steps to be taken?

JN: Whenever any change comes about, inevitably there are all manner of intermediate and transitional phases, but often it so happens that the structure of government becomes rather petrified and does not change rapidly enough, while economic and other changes are inevitably going on, because economic changes do not wait for laws and enactments;

3. Article I of the Indian National Congress, as interpreted by the Lahore Congress in 1929, declared that Swaraj shall mean complete independence as against the original meaning of Dominion Status.

they go on while the structure does not change. The result is that in extreme cases there are big upheavals which forcibly change the structure, and those are called revolutions, but even in that case there are transition periods. I take it that this question refers more to the structure of government than to any intermediate period and it is therefore difficult to answer, because that depends on so many factors. It depends partly on us but largely on the British Government and largely on various forces, national and international. Obviously if there was a mutual arrangement between Britain and the people of India there would inevitably be transitional stages in the process of reaching that goal. It might take a long time, but there would have to be some steps in the process; one cannot suddenly and all at once bring about a big change. On the other hand, if there is no possibility of a change being brought about by mutual agreement, then there are likely to be upheavals, and it is difficult to say what the result of an upheaval will be. It depends on the size of the upheaval; it depends on the great economic forces that cause the upheaval, and anything might happen, because, as I conceive it, the fundamental problem of India really is economic in its various aspects. The chief problem is the land problem, with its enormous amount of unemployment and over-pressure on land, and connected with that is the industrial problem, because probably if one tries to solve the land problem one will have to consider the question of industry. There are also many other problems, such as unemployment in the middle classes, and they will really have to be tackled all together, so that they may fit into each other, and not individually and separately.

All these problems have to be tackled for many reasons, but the fundamental reason is that the economic situation is growing worse and the condition of the vast masses is going further and further down. They cannot be tackled by merely changing the political structure at the top. The political structure might be such as to help us in tackling the problems, and the real test of the political structure is this: does it help us and will it make it easier for us to tackle these problems and solve them?

With regard to an intermediate period, therefore, all one can say is that there is bound to be some intermediate period. We are passing through an intermediate period now, but whether the development is going to be by arrangement or agreement or by sudden jumps or big jumps the future alone can show.

In India the Congress and some groups outside the Congress have suggested that the proper and democratic way to deal with the political aspect of the problem is by means of a constituent assembly, that is to

say, fundamentally the people of India should decide the constitution of India; they do not admit that the people of India should remain merely passive agents of a foreign authority in regard to the drawing up of such a constitution. The only way in which the desires of the people of India can take shape is through some such constituent assembly. Today that is not a feasible proposition, simply because it cannot be put into effect unless the British Government itself decides to put an end to its domination in India and leave the Indian people to develop their own constitution, or, whether the British Government so decides or not, the pressure of events brings it about, because a real constituent assembly involves ultimately or, in fact, in the near future after it is formed, the end of British domination in India. A constituent assembly does not mean merely a group of so-called leaders coming together and drawing up a constitution. The whole idea behind the constituent assembly is this: that it should be elected by means of an adult franchise, men and women together, so that there should be really mass representation, in order to give effect to the economic urges of the masses. The present difficulty is that a number of upper middle class people sit down and, instead of talking in terms of economics, they discuss the question of offices in the new constitution and who will be appointed to them; there is a desire to share in the spoils of office, in patronage, and so forth, which the new constitution might bring, and that partly gives rise to the communal problem. If the mass elements take part in the election of the constituent assembly, obviously they will not be interested in getting jobs in the new constitution; they are interested in their own economic troubles and attention will immediately be given to social and economic issues, whilst some of the other problems, which appear to loom large but are fundamentally not important, will recede into the background, like the communal problem.

The second part of the question is: does the India Act in any way meet the need for an intermediate period of transition? I have just said that the test of a constitution is this: whether it helps us to solve the economic problems which face us and which are the real problems. The India Act, as you perhaps know, has been criticized from almost every possible angle by almost every possible group in India, moderate or advanced. I doubt if it has any friends at all in India. If there are a few persons who are prepared to tolerate it, either they belong to the big vested interests in India or they are people who by sheer habit tolerate everything that the British Government does. Apart from those people, almost every political group in India has taken the strongest exception to the India Act. They all object to it and have criticized it in very great detail, and the general feeling is that, far from helping

us, it really takes us back and it binds our hands and feet so tightly that we cannot get a move on. All the vested interests in Britain and in India have found such a permanent place in this Act that any substantial social or economic change or political change becomes almost impossible, short of revolution.⁴ On the one hand, under the India Act we cannot even endeavour to make substantial economic changes; on the other hand, we cannot change the India Act itself. You must not think that in the India Act we are getting some democratic instrument which can be developed into something better. That is not so. You must not apply the analogy of the various steps taken in the Dominions—in Canada and in Australia—in the early stages of the development of self-government in those countries. The problems there were very simple; there were simple communities to be dealt with, and, whatever the steps taken were, there was room for inevitable development, and that development did take place. That does not apply to India at all. Today India has not to face a simple problem; it has to face a very complicated economic problem and the decision to be taken on that problem cannot be postponed. Secondly, the India Act is such that it cannot be developed. Of course, there can be development from time to time if the British Government itself changes the India Act, but, as it is, even if 99 or 100 per cent of the people of India want to change it they cannot do so. It has no seeds of change in it; it is a permanent fixing of the chains of vested interest on the Indian people. The only choice that is offered to the Indian people is to submit to it or, if they want to change it, to revolt against it in some form or other. Therefore the India Act does not in any way meet the need for an intermediate period of transition. Under the India Act a wider electorate is created, and that is a desirable thing, but it is the only desirable thing in the Act.

Q: What is the relation of the Indian problem in regard to the world problems? Does the League of Nations help in this connection?

JN: I think that nearly all the major problems that we have to face in the world today—in Europe or India or China or America—are intimately connected together, and it is really difficult to understand any

4. The "special responsibilities" of the Governor General authorised him to safeguard the rights and interests of members and ex-members of the public services, prevent commercial and financial discrimination against British individuals and companies and against British imports and protect the rights of the states and princes.

one of them or ultimately to solve any one of them without thinking of the other problems. The different parts of the world today are becoming extraordinarily interrelated with each other, and events which happen in one part of the world immediately react and interact upon the other parts of the world. If there is a big thing such as an international war, obviously the whole world is upset. If there is an economic crisis—we have had a very big one in the past few years—that affects the whole world. These big waves and movements affect the whole world, and obviously the Indian problem is intimately connected with other problems. Anything big that happens in India obviously affects the whole British group of nations—British imperialism. Anything that affects British imperialism makes a great difference in the world, because British imperialism today is a very important factor in world politics. So far as India is concerned, it is a well-known fact that India has had the greatest influence on British foreign policy in the last hundred years or so. During the Napoleonic period India loomed large; although perhaps when you read about the Napoleonic campaigns you find that India is seldom mentioned, it was in the background all the time. Whether it was the Crimean War or the occupation of Egypt,⁵ always there was the question of India in the background and the routes to India. The routes to India have often been before British statesmen. Perhaps some of you may remember that even after the Great War there was an idea, fostered by Mr. Winston Churchill and some of the leading figures in British public life, of having an enormous Middle Eastern empire from the borders of India to Constantinople, but it did not take shape. It sounds rather curious now, but at that time, after the war, all that area was in British occupation; Persia was in British occupation, and so were Mesopotamia, Palestine, parts of Arabia, and Constantinople. Therefore the idea was not such a fanciful one as it seems to be now, but various things happened to prevent it taking shape; there was the Soviet Government and there were events in Turkey and Persia, and so forth, and the whole thing was upset by various developments. Even so, the object of the British Government was to control the land route to India, because the land route was becoming important, owing to the development of aeroplanes and motor traffic. The question of Mosul nearly brought about conflict between Turkey and England, chiefly because Mosul dominates the land route to India.

5. In 1882 by Britain.

Therefore from many points of view the question of India affects world problems very greatly. Anything that happens to India inevitably affects other countries.

With regard to the League of Nations in this connection, the League of Nations might perhaps help India if the Indian viewpoint was put before it properly and pressed before it, but so far the position has been that India has really nothing to do with the League of Nations except that it is represented on the League. The so-called Indian representatives on the League of Nations are nominated by the Government of India in consultation with the British Government, so that they really represent on the League the viewpoint of the British Government; they do not represent in the slightest Indian public opinion. Therefore you might say that India is not represented at all on the League of Nations, but that the British Government gets an extra representative. If India could be properly represented, I suppose the League of Nations would do some good, although fundamentally the League of Nations, of course, is an organization for the maintenance of the *status quo* in the world, and obviously the Indian people desire to change their *status quo*. Therefore, if they laid any fundamental proposition before the League of Nations, it would probably be barred under some section of the Covenant or of the rules under which the League functions, on the ground that it would interfere with the domestic policy of the British Empire.

Q: How far is the communal problem due to economic causes?

JN: This question perhaps is not properly framed (I am partly responsible for that), in the sense that the communal question is not fundamentally due to economic causes. It has an economic background which often influences it, but it is due much more to political causes. It is not due to religious causes; I should like you to remember that. Religious hostility or antagonism has very little to do with the communal question. It has something to do with the communal question in that there is a slight background of religious hostility which has in the past sometimes given rise to conflict and sometimes to broken heads, in the case of processions and so forth, but the present communal question is not a religious one, although sometimes it exploits religious sentiment and there is trouble. It is a political question of the upper middle classes which has arisen partly because of the attempts of the British Government to weaken the national movement or to create rifts in it, and partly because of the prospect of political power coming into India and the upper classes desiring to share in the spoils

of office. It is to this extent economic, that the Mohammedans are on the whole the poorer community as compared with the Hindus. Sometimes you find that the creditors are the Hindus and the debtors the Mohammedans; sometimes the landlords are Hindus and the tenants are Mohammedans. Of course, the Hindus are tenants also, and they form the majority of the population. It sometimes happens that a conflict is really between a money-lender and his debtors or between a landlord and his tenants, but it is reported in the press and it assumes importance as a communal conflict between Hindus and Mohammedans. Fundamentally this communal problem is a problem of the conflict between the members of the upper middle-class Hindus and Moslems for jobs and power under the new constitution. It does not affect the masses at all. Not a single communal demand has the least reference to any economic issues in India or has the least reference to the masses. If you examine the communal demands you will see that they refer only to seats in the legislature or to various kinds of jobs which might be going in the future.

Q: What alternative method would you use for dealing with the situation in the north west frontier? And similarly for the situation in Bengal?

JN: Briefly put, the alternative method I would suggest is the method of conciliation plus some kind of effort to deal with the problem on economic lines, because fundamentally the difficulty of the frontier men is scarcity. They live in a hard country, on the mountain sides, and they come down in search of food and loot. Personally I do not think the frontier problem is very difficult of solution. If a proper and friendly approach is made, I think it ought to be solved fairly easily. As a matter of fact, my own impression is that a similar—not exactly the same, but a similar—problem was faced in the nineteenth century by the Russian Government, that is to say, the old Tsarist Government, because their frontier was fairly near and they had to deal with more or less the same type of people. So far as I know, they never had any great difficulty in dealing with them; certainly they did not have the amount of difficulty that the British Government has had for a hundred years or so. If one thing is obvious it is this, that the British Government's frontier policy has been a dismal and total failure. If they are unable to settle the frontier question after having dealt with it for generations, having had every year, or every other year, a military expedition with slaughter and bombing and all the rest of it,

obviously there is something wanting in their policy. The Tsarist Government never had to face all the difficulties which the British Government has to face, the reason being, I think, that the Tsarist Government made it possible for the frontier men to lead a more normal life; they tried to colonise them, to settle them on the land. I am only putting this forward as a suggestion; I do not know enough about the matter to state definitely why the Tsarist Government did not have the same difficulty that the British Government has in dealing with the frontier men. Anyhow, the population involved is not large, and it should not be difficult to deal with them on economic lines, so that this economic urge might disappear. For the rest, obviously the approach must be friendly and not like the recent approach of the Italians in Abyssinia. That kind of approach has failed completely. The frontier men are very brave people; they do not very much care whether they live or die, but they do not like to be dominated. They are freedom-loving people, as mountain people often are, and the British Government has not been able to subdue them permanently. It can conquer them from time to time but it cannot subdue them.

With regard to a friendly approach, for years past Mr. Gandhi has been invited by the frontier people to go to them. I believe he went to the Frontier Province some years ago, but he has never crossed the frontier or gone right up to it. His name, however, is very well known on both sides of the frontier. He is very popular with the frontier men and repeated invitations have been extended to him to visit them, but the government has not allowed him to do so. He did not want to go in defiance of the wishes of the government; he did not want to invite conflict on that issue, so whenever he wanted to go he always referred the matter to the Viceroy or the Government of India, saying: "I have been asked to go there and I should like to go", and he always got the same answer, to this effect: "We strongly advise you not to go." That was almost tantamount to an order, and so he has not gone. Apart from Mr. Gandhi, the great leader of the Frontier Province, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, has quite an extraordinary influence and popularity all over that region. It is astounding how he has become such a tremendous figure in that area. That in itself, of course, was quite sufficient to make the British Government dislike him intensely. A man who has such a commanding influence over these turbulent Pathans is a man who will not be liked by any government agency. He therefore spends his time in prison; he is in prison at the present moment. After two or three years of detention without trial he came out last year, but he was out for only three months, and then he was sent back to prison for a two years' sentence, which he is

living now.⁶ As you perhaps know, he is a member of the highest Congress executive. He is one of the most popular men not only on the frontier but in the whole of India. You will realize from his name that he is a Mohammedan and not a Hindu. He is one of the greatest Moslem leaders of the masses in India. He occupies one of the highest positions in the Congress movement. You must remember that the Congress movement, although it is inevitably composed chiefly of Hindus, has a very stiff backing of Moslems. Therefore if Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Mr. Gandhi did go to the frontier I think they would have the most magnificent reception there, and they could discuss the frontier problem there with others. I do not think it would be very difficult to solve that problem. I do not mean to say that such a visit would put an end to all troubles; that is absurd. Certain troubles will arise again and again, but the foundations of stability could be laid, and if some economic remedies were also applied I think an end could be definitely put to this recurring trouble.

With regard to Bengal, terrorism in Bengal has gained far greater prominence and advertisement than it really deserves. That it has existed there, and that it exists there now to some extent is undeniable, but, after all, when you come to think of it, if in a country like India or a great province like Bengal one or two terrorist acts are committed in the course of two or three years (in the last two years, I think, none have taken place and in the year before there were one or two), although it is deplorable it is not such a terrible thing. We must not lose our sense of proportion in this matter. That is the first fact I want to put before you. Secondly, so far as my knowledge goes (obviously I have no direct immediate knowledge, because I have been in prison for two or three years), there is really no organized terrorist movement now. There was, but I do not think there is now in Bengal or elsewhere in India. I do not mean by that that people in Bengal or elsewhere do not believe in methods of violence; there are many who believe in methods of violence and revolution, but I think that even those who used to believe in acts of terrorism do not do so now; that is to say, the old terrorists, or many of them, still think that in all probability some kind of armed violence might be necessary to fight the dominating power, but they think in terms of insurrection, violence,

6. Arrested on 24 December 1931, he was released on 27 August 1934 with a ban prohibiting his entry into N.W.F.P. and Punjab. He was re-arrested on 7 December 1934 on a charge of sedition and sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment.

or some kind of organized revolt; they do not think in terms of throwing bombs or shooting down people. Many of them, I think, were drawn completely away from the terrorist movement by Mr. Gandhi's peaceful movement, but even those who remained turned away from the purely terrorist attitude, which, as you know, is a very infantile attitude in political movements. When a national movement begins there is always a certain background of sentiment and helplessness and hopelessness which drives an excited youth to an act of terrorism, but, as the movement develops and grows stronger, the energy of the people is directed towards organized activity, towards mass action, and so forth. That has happened in India, and inevitably the terrorist movement has practically ended, but the extraordinary amount of terrible repression that has gone on in Bengal inevitably gives rise to some reprisals on the part of the old terrorist group. For instance, an individual may become exceedingly bitter because of certain things that have happened to his own friends in his own city. Terrible things are happening there, and as a reaction the individual or two or three individuals may decide on an act of reprisal directed towards the person who did those things. That has nothing to do with terrorism as an organization; it is purely an individual act of reprisal. Such an act of terrorism sometimes occurs, but, as I have said, even that has not happened for the last two years. Again, the old terrorists are more or less well known to the police. Many of them are interned or imprisoned and many of them have been executed, but a number of them, I suppose, are still about. I met one of them two or three years ago. He was a big man in the terrorist movement in the old days, and he came to see me and said: "I am definitely of opinion that these acts of terrorism are no good. I do not want to do them. I am inducing my people not to do them. But what am I to do? I am hunted like a dog. I go about from place to place. I know that whenever I am caught, I shall have to suffer the death penalty. I do not propose to do that. When I am caught I shall shoot in self-defence." One often finds that it is when an old terrorist has been rounded up or is on the point of being caught that he shoots. The net closes round him, and he prefers shooting and being shot and dying in that way to being sent to the gallows.

What I mean is this: the movement is not functioning at all in an aggressive way. Sometimes an individual may commit an act of terrorism in a moment of excitement or in self-defence when he is being caught; otherwise terrorism is over. Obviously when such a thing happens it has some psychological or other roots from which it arises, and it is quite absurd to deal with it by a permanent system of

martial law. The average military mind can think of a solution to a problem only in terms of martial law, and, unfortunately for us, in India the average civilian mind has been functioning largely in a military way. Obviously a terrorist plays with his own life. He may be going to lose his life at the very moment when he commits an act of terrorism. For instance, when a person goes into a crowded hall and shoots another person, obviously his or her life is forfeit. I cannot see how a person who is prepared to give up his life can be terrified by any military measures which may be taken. He knows when he carries out his terroristic enterprise that he is bound to die; usually he carries a little poison in his pocket and swallows it after the act. What happens is that a large number of innocent people suffer.

Q: In what ways can people in this country help? What part do you think a Conciliation Group can play?

JN: That is not a very easy question for me to answer—though I have endeavoured to answer it in various places—because it depends on changing conditions here, but certainly a great deal can be done if people really do take an interest in the Indian problem and think that it requires, both from the point of view of India and from the point of view of the world, a suitable solution. I do not suppose that in the present circumstances individual groups can make very much difference; that is to say, they cannot change government policy, though they might affect it in minor matters. But I think such groups can always keep conditions in India in the forefront here. For instance, even now there is no realization amongst the British people of the quite extraordinary amount of repression and denial of civil liberties that is going on in India. I am told that about a month ago there was some reference in Parliament to political prisoners. Some Labour members raised the question, and some Conservative members said: "What! Are there still any political prisoners in India?" That question shows the amazing ignorance that prevails on the subject. There is a very large number of people in India who have been detained without trial for five years, six years, and various other periods, a large number of ordinary political prisoners are being convicted from day to day and the whole apparatus of repression is functioning from day to day. I think the average Englishman or Englishwoman does not require much detailed knowledge of Indian problems to understand the problem of civil liberty; the average English person does feel that civil liberty is a desirable thing, and, when the facts of the

situation in India are put before him, he is somewhat shocked; he dislikes the utter denial of civil liberty in India. I think a great deal can be done by keeping all these facts before the people of this country, and much can be done in that way by cooperation between various groups. I believe there is a National Council for Civil Liberties⁷ here, and that could usefully cooperate with other groups in the direction I have indicated.

With regard to specific Indian problems, especially the economic conditions, the way in which the political problem depends on the economic problem is of importance, because when that subject is considered the political problem is viewed in its proper perspective. Otherwise you function in the air, as we have been functioning at these Round Table Conferences and other conferences. A number of lawyers sit down and produce a paper constitution which has no relation to the existing facts or position in India but has relation to only one fact, that is, that the vested interests in India want to perpetuate their existence.

Therefore any group in this country can certainly help the cause of India, and not only the cause of India but, as I think one might say, having regard to the question of civil liberties and other matters which are involved, the cause of humanity. A group could go much further if it decided to adopt the political and economic standpoint of the advanced groups, but, however far it goes, it can, I think, function effectively.

As for the Conciliation Group, I have been told that it is not an organization but a group with no specially defined limits. Such a group, I think, has done good work in the past, and I believe it can certainly do good work in the future. I have suggested that it would be desirable for the various groups interested in India as a whole or in particular questions, such as the question of civil liberties, to keep in touch with each other. They need not merge into each other, because they have different outlooks. There is no reason why one group should adopt the outlook of another group. One may not be prepared to commit itself to some points to which another group is committed, but still they may have a great deal in common. There is no reason why they should not occasionally meet together or representatives of them confer together, so that their activities might not overlap but might supplement each other.

7. Founded in February 1934 by British intellectuals, politicians and journalists.

Q: Should not the Indian national movement maintain some kind of effective agency in London for the purpose of spreading accurate information?

JN: I think that would be a highly desirable thing, and I doubt whether anybody would object in principle to it. You must remember that during the last six years India has gone through a very abnormal period. During four years of that time the Congress has been an illegal movement. We always hover on the edge of illegality; we do not know when we might be termed illegal, our funds confiscated, our property confiscated, and our offices confiscated. That makes it a little difficult to develop a foreign agency in the ordinary way, but certainly this is desirable, and I should very much like to have some kind of information bureau here and, it may be, in some other parts of Europe, to function, apart from questions of propaganda, by giving accurate information and providing books and papers, so that people who want that information might be able to obtain it.

Q: We sometimes meet with the objection or the criticism that if the British withdrew from India it would only open the way for Japan. It used to be Russia, but now it is Japan that is mentioned in that connection. Might we hear your opinion on that?

JN: It seems to me that the people who say that do not know very much about the present position or the probable future position of Japan with regard to India. The question can be considered in many ways, but I would put it to you briefly thus: how do you expect Japan to come to India, by sea or by land? Do you expect Japan to come to India after having subjugated the whole of China or before it has done so?

You must realize that it takes a little longer to go from India to Japan than it takes to go from India to England by sea. By the land route, by air, it takes a very little time to go from England to India, but it takes a very long time to go to Japan. One cannot go easily over the Himalaya mountains and the various deserts and other tracts of China. Therefore you must realize that India is not very easily accessible to Japan if Japan goes through China, so Japan has to come by a fairly intricate route through the Singapore Straits, and any hostile fleet could make it difficult for the Japanese to approach India. Even so, of course, Japan might come, but the real point is this, that Japan can never think in terms of the conquest of India so long as it has not

completely subjugated China and made it part of its empire. The conquest of China is a very difficult matter. At the moment Japan has overrun north China and it may perhaps extend further south, but I do not think that anyone acquainted with the history of China or the present position of China or the international position, imagines that Japan is likely to succeed in consolidating her empire in the whole of China. China is a tremendous problem for Japan, and, even if it is conquered, it will continue to be a problem and something which will really absorb the energies of Japan, and probably bring about its downfall. Look at Japan as it stands today as a world power. It seems very strong. Nobody interferes with Japan's territorial instincts and activities. It does what it likes in north China and Manchuria. Yet fundamentally the position of Japan in the world is a very unhappy position. It is isolated from the rest of the world; it has no friends in the world. On the one side there is a tremendous power, America, and there is not much love lost between Japan and the United States of America. On the other side there is China, which, although weak in one sense, is very strong in many ways. It is strong fundamentally, because its passive strength is great; its inertia is tremendous. But, even apart from that, the weakness of China today in the face of aggression is very largely due, I think, to the fact that some of the Chinese leaders are false to China; they are betraying China. It is not so much the weakness of China as the weakness of her leaders, Chiang Kai-shek and others, and this may lead to the overthrow of Chiang Kai-shek and some kind of a combined and powerful resistance later on. Therefore, in any event, Japan would have a hostile China to deal with, whether it was subjugated or not. With America on one side and China on the other, and the Soviet Republic in the north, which is always likely to be hostile, that Japan should embark on an adventure in India, three weeks' journey away, is to me inconceivable. Then, of course, India presumably would not sit idle. It may not be a strong country, but obviously it would do its utmost to defend itself against any aggression.

Q: We do not want to talk about only this aspect of the question. What will be the position on the north west frontier if that imperialism is really discarded? What will be the position as regards the security of India if that imperialism, which means constant jealousy and fear and suspicion between the two great powers, Soviet Russia and Great Britain, is finally abolished? What will be the position with regard to the defence policy of India, and what will then be the result in the organization and the cost of the Indian army?

JN: The result of the allaying of that suspicion would be peace and contentment on the frontier. With regard to the defence of India against Soviet aggression.....

Q: And Afghanistan; that is also an element.

JN: Yes, an element. Afghanistan is an unadvanced, industrially backward country, and as an effective military force it is strong only within its own territories. It is a difficult country to invade, because it is a mountainous country and the people are good fighters, but as an invading country it has no strength at all, so we can leave Afghanistan out of consideration.

With regard to Soviet Russia, the first proposition is that there is no power in the world today which is more peaceful and less inclined to aggression than Soviet Russia. I think that is admitted by everybody; it is publicly admitted by the British Foreign Office; in fact, the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Eden,⁸ said so the other day.

Q: The Government of India does not say that; it says the exact opposite.

JN: For various reasons. You can examine that. Soviet Russia from an economic point of view does not require India in the least, as Japan might, because India is a source of raw materials for England. Raw materials exist in sufficient quantities in Soviet territories. In minor matters India might help. Fundamentally Soviet Russia does not require India; it has not that economic urge. At the present moment it is absolutely full of its own economic problems of development, and it wants to take no risk at all of war or adventure. Obviously an invasion of India is a very big risk, not so much because of the strength of India but because any such thing involves today international complications, whether the invader is Japan or Russia. If Japan comes to India it is not a question merely of defeating the people of India, but there is the risk of having to fight on various fronts. Other powers step in, and international complications are introduced. So that Russian policy today (nobody can say what will happen thirty years hence) is bound to be an extraordinarily peaceful policy; there is no doubt about that. If it were not, Russia would immediately be afraid of trouble

8. Anthony Eden, later Lord Avon (b. 1897); Foreign Secretary, 1935-38; member of War Cabinet, 1939-45; Foreign Secretary, 1951-55; Prime Minister from 1955 to 1957, when he resigned after the Suez invasion.

from Japan in the east and from Germany in the west. We know that many European countries fear Russia today. The biggest factor at work is a great fear complex of being attacked, and so the countries go on increasing their military machines. So that there is no question of expecting, in the ordinary course, an invasion from Russia. So far as I am personally concerned, I very largely approve of the Russian system of government, and I hope some such thing will extend to India. I think we ought to be the most friendly of neighbours instead of being in conflict with each other. But, apart from that, obviously India, whatever her system of government is, whether socialist or not, will have to take steps to guard her frontiers.

Q: Against whom?

JN: It does not matter. The steps taken may not be very extensive, but India will have to take some steps. If the world continues to be divided up into various capitalist states, armies will have to be kept. It is relatively easy, I think, to protect India on the north west frontier. You have probably read histories of various invasions of India from the north west, but those histories exaggerate a little. There have been invasions, but if you spread them out over a period of two or three thousand years they have not been so frequent as some people seem to think. Those invasions took place not because of the strength of the attacking force but because at the time there was internal trouble in India, and the attacking force simply walked in. An attacking force can always be stopped on the north west frontier by an efficient army without any great numbers being employed. An efficient defence force must be built up to defend India from invasion; one has to face the risk of these things. One of the countries suffering most from a terrible fear of invasion is also at the same time one of the most powerful countries in the military sense, that is, France. France is terribly afraid of a Nazi invasion, and yet it has one of the biggest military machines in the world.

Q: The question has not actually arisen in the course of your addresses, but it might be of interest to know what your view is with regard to the contributions that may be expected from Indian women in the regeneration of India.

JN: Those contributions have been considerable. Indian women in the last fifteen or sixteen years have played a tremendous part in our national movement. You may remember that in 1930 Mr. Gandhi started the

civil disobedience movement in connection with the salt tax, and I think the most important and significant feature of that movement was the tremendous part that the women of India took in it. It was astonishing. Most of us were astounded by what we saw. It was not as if we had to push them out; they simply came out and took charge of the situation when most of their menfolk were in prison, and they functioned in an extraordinarily efficient way. The surprising thing was that, although many of them had had no experience of public activity, yet they became good organizers and they ran the whole movement practically without any men for a long time. They ran it not only very well but in a much more uncompromising way than the men might have done; they did become much more uncompromising about it in every way. That was such an eye-opener that I do not think after that any person in India dares to say that the women of India are going to play a subordinate part in the public life of India in the future. Of course, as you know, they have suffered in the past and they still suffer from a large number of social and semi-religious disabilities. They are trying to remove them, and to some extent they have to fight the inevitable reactions of men in that process. Certain orthodox elements in the community are trying to prevent them from removing these disabilities, but I think they are sufficiently alive to their task, and I do not think anyone can really stop them from carrying it out. So far as the national movement is concerned, the mere fact that such large numbers of women have taken such a large part in it makes it absolutely impossible for any nationalist to conceive of keeping them down in any political or social sense. The fundamental rights resolution⁹ which the Congress passed some years ago laid down as a fundamental right in the constitution the removal of all disabilities and the absolute equality of women with men in the eyes of the constitution.

Q: In your answer to the fourth question, regarding the communal problem, you suggested, I think, that the religious element was a small part of it and that it was not primarily economic, but that it resolved itself into political jealousy, political ambitions. How do you see it resolving in the light of the national movement? Do you feel that the central national aim would be so big that it would bring all the parties together?

JN: No. First of all I said that the communal movement was not religious, but that does not mean, of course, that there is not a religious

9. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 4, pp. 511-513.

background in India, and sometimes that is exploited. It is political mainly. It is also economic in the sense that the political problem largely arises because of the problem of unemployment in the middle classes, and it is the unemployment among the middle classes that helps the communal movement to gain importance. It is there that the jobs come in. To some extent the growth of nationalism and the nationalist spirit suppresses the communal idea, but fundamentally it will go when economic issues and social issues come to the forefront and divert the attention of the masses, and even of the lower middle classes, because these issues really affect them, and inevitably then the communal leaders would have to sink into the background. That happened in 1921, at the time of the first noncooperation movement, when no communal leaders in India dared to come out into the open. There was no meeting held and there was no reference to them in the papers. They disappeared absolutely because there was such a big movement on other issues. As soon as a big political movement starts the communal leaders come to the forefront. They are always being pushed to the front by the British Government in India. Therefore the right way to deal with the communal question is to allow economic questions affecting the masses to be discussed. One of the chief objections to the India Act is that, because it divides India into seven or eight—I am not sure how many—separate religious compartments,¹⁰ it makes it difficult for economic and social questions to be brought up. Of course they will come up, because there is the economic urge behind them, but still it makes it difficult.

Q: Do you not think caste comes into the communal question at all—Brahmin against non-Brahmin? That is a matter we know so well in Madras.

JN: I do not think the communal question is affected much by caste. In south India, of course, the question of caste comes in, and it has given rise to great bitterness. I was thinking more of Hindu *versus* Moslem. I am not personally acquainted with conditions in the south in recent years, but it used to be more a question of non-Brahmin *versus* the vested interest. Taking the depressed classes, they really are the proletariat in the economic sense; the others are the better-off people. All these matters can be converted into economic terms, and then

10. The Act of 1935 divided the total number of seats allotted to the Federal Assembly into several categories like general seats, general seats reserved for scheduled classes and separate electorates for Sikhs, Mohammedans, Anglo-Indians, Europeans and Indian Christians.

one can understand the position better. I do not think the Brahmin and the non-Brahmin question as such is very important now. There is a very large number of non-Brahmins in the Congress. In the Congress the question does not arise. It has some importance in local areas in the south, because of various local factors, but I do not think the question of Brahmin and non-Brahmin comes into the communal question at all.

Q: Referring to the present Government of India Act and the possibility of its becoming a transition to something that India would desire, you suggested that there were certain economic aims that India had which could not possibly be given any expression under the present Act and would lead to clashes. Could you tell us what, in your opinion, is the way that India should develop in regard to economic arrangements and systems?

JN: Whatever I say on this subject will be my own personal view, because I cannot say that India as a whole desires what I desire.

Fundamentally we have to face the land problem chiefly, and the problem of unemployment, which is connected with it. I think that nothing short of large-scale collectivist or cooperative farming will deal effectively with the land question. These wretched small holdings will then disappear. Production will greatly increase and many other benefits will follow, but unemployment would not be affected thereby. In fact, by scientific farming it is possible that unemployment might even increase a little, as far as direct employment on the land is concerned, though indirectly other avenues of employment would be opened up. In order to provide employment we must absorb people in industrial development, in cottage industries, in big machine industries, and in the enormous development of the social services, such as education, hygiene, and sanitation. There are practically no social services in India today. The development of industry and the land would have to be planned as a whole; it cannot be dealt with in sections. If one tries to tackle one part, one finds something left over which one cannot provide for. The whole basis should be, in my opinion, not the profit motive, but producing for consumption, because if we produce for profit the result is that we simply glut the markets; we cannot sell the goods, because people have no money with which to buy them, and so we get over-production while at the same time many people have nothing at all. We should organize on the socialist basis and have large-scale agriculture, cooperative or collectivist, big machine industries and cottage industries. The cottage industries must not be such as would be likely

to conflict with big industries, because then they would collapse, but I think there will be plenty of room for the growth of cottage industries for a long time to come, simultaneously with the growth of big industries. If big industries are not developed on a capitalist basis, they will deal with the essentials which are required and there will be no needless waste of energy. If all these things are taken together, I imagine we might go a little way towards the solution of the various problems that confront us. I cannot see any movement in that direction under present conditions.

Q: You mean something similar to the Soviet system of the organization of industry and agriculture?

JN: I personally should like to have something similar to that, but I was really envisaging something much less for the moment. I do not want India to be drilled and forced into a certain position, because the costs of such drilling are too great; it is not worthwhile; it is not desirable from many points of view. I want to go in the direction I have indicated; I may not be able to go far, but that is the direction in which I want to go. I have expressed my personal view, and I do not speak for India.

A NOTE ON THE LAND PROBLEM¹¹

Any radical change in the land system, involving large-scale cooperative and collectivist farming, must be preceded or accompanied by the ending of the present zamindari or landlord system wherever it prevails. The question arises as to whether compensation should be given to the landlords so dispossessed. If the change can be brought about by peaceful and democratic methods, it would be desirable to give some compensation and so avoid a conflict which is likely to be wasteful and more costly than the compensation itself. But it must be borne in mind that anything in the nature of full compensation is utterly out of the question, especially in so far as the big landlords are concerned. To give such compensation in the shape of bonds would be to mortgage the future of the land and to continue almost the same burden on the peasantry, though in another form. Therefore a form of compensation

11. These paragraphs were added by Jawaharlal when he revised the verbatim report for publication.

would have to be devised which removed this burden and at the same time lessened the distress and upsetting which a change-over would bring to the landlord group. Probably the compensation would be proportionately less higher up in the scale—the middle landlords getting proportionately more than the bigger ones.

It should be remembered that the word "landlord" is rather a misleading one. In the United Provinces (a zamindari province) there are a million and a half so-called landlords. Probably about 85 per cent of them are no better than the tenant class, and many are worse off than the better-off tenants. There can be no question of depriving them of anything; they stand in need of further help and of a reduction of their burdens—debt, revenue, etc. Of the remaining 15 per cent, only a tiny fraction of 1 per cent are really biggish landlords—about 5,000 in all—and about 1,000 of these might be considered the big landlords whose incomes from land vary from about Rs. 12,000 to Rs. 5,000,000 per annum. Those whose incomes run into millions are a mere handful, of course.

During the recent depression and fall in agricultural prices the position of the landlord has steadily deteriorated, and many of the middle landlords are on the verge of bankruptcy. The moneylender holds them, as well as the tenants, in his grip. Some recent legislation has slightly eased the position vis-a-vis the moneylender, but it does not go nearly far enough.

Apart from the landlord and the tenant there are large numbers of the landless proletariat who are largely unemployed, or only partially employed, during harvesting and other seasons.

The problem in those parts of India where the zamindari system does not prevail (Punjab, Gujarat, south India) and there is peasant proprietorship, is somewhat different. These peasant proprietors are much better off than the tenants of the zamindari areas, but latterly they have also deteriorated greatly. Behind them again are the landless classes, many of these being the so-called depressed classes.

Questions of compensation and the like arise only when an attempt is made, as it should be made, to have a peaceful change-over from one system to another. In the event of upheavals, brought on by delay in making the necessary changes in time, it is impossible to say how matters will shape themselves.

47. On the New Constitution¹

The main problems of India have not been considered. You hear much about the language and communal problems, but the main problems are economic.

The obvious way to deal with the communal problem is to allow the fundamental economic issues to come forward, so that attention can be diverted from the communal issue. The latter will have to be faced and will inevitably be solved as the economic issues are allowed to come up.

The present land tenure system should be replaced by large-scale agriculture on a collective and cooperative basis.

The Congress stands for complete independence, because India wants to be outside the range of British imperialism.

I would like the meeting to consider the problems of India, not so much from the viewpoint of the Act that you have just passed, but as to how it affects the big problems of India. My view is that the only way to solve them is to leave them to Indians.

In my opinion a decision as regards a conflict between India and Britain lies with the British Government, which has taken certain steps which are making the position progressively worse. There will be no peace if the present policy is persisted in.

Question: If Indians show they can work the new constitution, would not that be the quickest way to complete freedom?

Jawaharlal Nehru: That involves the question of what we can do under the constitution. I feel we cannot consider any of the main problems.

Q: Are there conditions such as will enable the constitution to develop if the British army is withdrawn?

JN: If it is withdrawn by a friendly agreement between the two countries the Indian army is good enough to look after India. There is no danger in the near future of any external invasion. We will welcome British officers for the Indian army. If the safeguards are examined, you will find that everything worthwhile is restricted. The final

1. Address at a meeting of members of all parties in the House of Commons, 5 February 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 7 February 1936.



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responsibility as regards law and order, finance and the minorities remains with the Governor and finally with the Viceroy.

48. In the Vast Prison of India¹

Teach Indians to think in terms of bread and butter and not in terms of temples and mosques and you will find that the communal question has receded to the background.

People here imagine that they have got rid of the Indian problem, but the India Act means no peace in India and the Congress has rejected it completely. There may be conflict in the Congress camp, yet there is a background of goodwill and we are all friends.

Whether one goes to a little prison or a big one does not matter. One is always in a vast prison, my dear friend, that is India. Soon I shall be going back, entangled again, in spite of myself, in Indian politics. That is not a profession but an urge. You get caught in the coils.

1. Interview to the press, London, 6 February 1936. From *The Times of India*, 20 February 1936.

49. To Rajendra Prasad¹

Lausanne
10.2.36

My dear Rajendra Babu,

Thank you for your cable and your letter informing me of the dates of the Congress. I am taking advantage of the new dates to stay on a few extra days here. But in any event I hope to reach India a good month before the Congress. The exact date has not been settled as yet but I shall fix it up soon. Approximately I should be in Allahabad by the 7th March or earlier.

I think that it will be better for me to meet you, Bapu and others informally before a meeting of the Working Committee is held. It is

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-43(KW)(i)/1935, p. 3, N.M.M.L.

these informal talks that count. When these talks should take place I leave it to you to decide. I do not know if Bapu will be well enough then to be bothered with discussions. If he has no objections we might meet at Ahmedabad or wherever he might be. In any event I shall have to go to Bapu.

I have decided to travel by air and to go direct to Allahabad. I should like to spend at least three days before I go elsewhere. If you so wish it, you can fix the meeting of the Working Committee without waiting for my arrival. I suppose there will be enough time to do so even afterwards.

My visit to London was very successful but of course that does not mean much. I shall tell you about it when we meet. Kamala has been a little better lately.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

50. India's Problems¹

After long deliberation the British Parliament passed last year a new Act conferring, as it was said, a new constitution and a generous measure of self-government to the people of India. This Act, it is well known, has been strenuously opposed and is bitterly disliked by almost every politically-minded Indian, moderate or advanced. It is an imposed constitution with the bayonet behind it, and the motive underlying it can best be appreciated by examining conditions in India today and the intensive repression that has become a permanent and normal feature there. A new constitution which requires the machinery of the Criminal Law Amendment Act to suppress every kind of civil liberty, the press and censorship laws to prevent the free functioning of the press and the introduction of "dangerous" books, the continued imprisonment of thousands of persons without charge or trial, and fresh arrests frequently for sedition, is obviously a gift which does not evoke enthusiasm. It is something which cannot endure for it makes the situation worse and does not solve a single one of India's problems.

The Indian view is that the new Act is deliberately designed to strengthen and consolidate all the vested and reactionary elements in India—the British Government, British financial interests, the Indian

1. An article written in Lausanne, 21 February 1936. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.
This does not seem to have been published.

princes, big semi-feudal landlords and all others who are interested in preserving the present order. It makes even minor changes difficult and any major change almost impossible without an upheaval which will wreck the Act and all that it stands for.

During all the discussions on the India Act the question was treated from a lawyer's point of view and the human and economic side was forgotten. Eminent lawyers quibbled about details which did not matter and conveniently ignored the vital issues. The feudal and autocratic rights of the princes were too sacred to be touched but not so the right to live of the three hundred and fifty odd millions of India. The communal issue became the biggest bogey of all and was trotted out at every convenient opportunity.

What are the real problems of India? Inevitably there is the nationalist urge to political freedom and this is bound to remain a dominant factor till all imperialist control is removed. But behind it, and giving it substance, are the economic problems—of grinding poverty, of immense unemployment of the middle classes, of the industrial workers, and chiefly of the rural population.

The last hundred and fifty years of British rule have progressively accentuated the problem of rural unemployment by increasing the burden on the land.² Gradually the pre-industrial economy has been killed without giving place to other occupations. In England the change-over at the beginning of industrial capitalism brought much misery and exploitation of the landless proletariat and the unemployed artisans. But gradually and after much travail they found a place in the new factories. In India this change-over was hastened by the ruthless policy of the government and yet no new avenue of employment was opened out to the enormous numbers of artisans and others employed in the cottage industries and small manufacturers who were thrown out. Vast numbers died in repeated famines, the others went back to the land and increased the pressure on it. The capacity for production of the country rapidly decreased while manufactured goods poured in in increasing quantities and, as the railways spread, spread to the remotest villages. The British Government actively discouraged the growth of factories by imposing a tax on imported machinery.³ India thus became passively industrialized, suffering all the evils of this without any of its benefits. This process lasted throughout the nineteenth century. In spite of discouragement, however, industrialism grew though very slowly. Wartime

2. According to the census, the population dependent on agriculture increased from 61 per cent in 1891 to 73 per cent in 1921.

3. An import duty of 10 per cent on machinery was imposed in September 1931.

conditions from 1914 onwards hastened this process⁴ and to some extent the British Government was compelled by circumstances to encourage it. A capitalist class was consolidated and, as nationalism became more clamant and aggressive, an attempt was made to tone down the opposition of this class and to prevent it from throwing its weight on the side of revolutionary nationalism. To some extent this class became the junior partners and hangers-on of the British capitalist class in the exploitation of India. Essentially, however, British policy still remained the same—to prevent the development of India as an industrial country and to keep it as an agricultural background to industrial England. We were told that the true prosperity of India lay in her agriculture and not in modern industry. In so far as industry spread in India it was largely with British capital and under British directions.

This spread of industry was not fast enough to relieve the overpressure on the land which continued growing and resulted in the progressive fragmentation of the land, till most of the holdings were so small as to be wholly uneconomic. This led to vast rural unemployment and the pauperisation of the masses. That is the main problem of India and the root cause of her poverty. The depression of recent years accompanied by the fall in agricultural prices has accentuated the problem and brought even the small and middle landlords to such a pass that they are on the verge of bankruptcy. The existing land system has been shaken to its foundations and it seems unlikely that it can survive for long, though it may be propped up by various devices and the power of the state for some more years. Any radical change inevitably involves a change in the land system itself.

The recent depression hit industry also very hard and increased industrial unemployment. Many mills and factories closed down and the drift of the village to the town was reversed, thus increasing the pressure on the land.

Unemployment also spread very rapidly in the middle classes who had few openings left to them apart from state or semi-state service and the overcrowded learned professions. All these economic urges found an outlet in the nationalist and revolutionary movements in the hope that political freedom would lead to avenues of escape from the morass of poverty and unemployment. Gradually also the economic issues began to colour the nationalist outlet and a socialist movement sprang up.

These are the real problems of India. Nothing substantial has been done to meet them and nothing substantial can be done till the whole

4. The production of iron increased from 235,000 tons in 1914 to 368,000 tons in 1921 and of steel from 67,000 tons to 125,000 tons.

existing political and economic structure is changed and the paralysing shadow of imperialism is removed. Feeble and pathetic attempts are made towards their solution which only make it clear that this solution cannot be found within the existing framework. A Royal Agricultural Commission was appointed some years ago under the chairmanship of Lord Linlithgow. Under its very terms of reference it could not enquire into the land tenure system; it could only hover over the surface and suggest superficial changes and the establishment of expensive boards and committees. Other commissions and committees come and go making no difference to anybody, except for the appointment of a few more heavily paid officials. The new Act closes the door to all vital change by protecting every vested interest. It is thus a definite barrier to all progress and has to be broken or removed if we are to get a move on.

For a socialist the solution can only lie along socialist lines: a widely-planned scheme affecting agriculture, industry, communications, education and the social services, which hardly exist in the rural areas. It is not possible to do much by taking each part of this separately and ignoring the rest. Agriculture will have to be based on large-scale co-operative and collectivist farming, big industry and cottage industries must be pushed on at a rapid pace, and education, sanitation, roads, irrigation, housing, etc. must be tackled at something approaching the Russian pace.

How is this to be done? Not while imperialism dominates India, not so long as the city of London is the arbiter of India's destiny, not when every vested and reactionary interest is protected and feudalism flourishes, and civil liberty is crushed. It will certainly not be done through the new Act which represents and consolidates all these imperialistic, financial, vested and feudal interests.

And this is why we in India want an end of the India Act and the complete elimination of imperialism, in short, the independence of our country, and those of us who are socialists aim at a socialist India.

51. A Visit to England¹

I was twelve days in London—twelve full days spent in meeting many people and groups, and much talk and argument and the answering of

1. Lausanne, 22 February 1936. First published in *The Socialist*, 1936. Reprinted in *India and the World*, (London, 1936), pp. 210-217.

questions. I went with no particular object or intention, I sought nothing in particular except to meet some people I wanted to see and to renew my acquaintance with various currents of English thought. It was almost an educational visit for me, and though circumstances made me talk a great deal, I went to receive impressions more than to give them. Gradually I found myself drawn into all manner of environments and meeting people whom I had least expected to meet. I was a little surprised and pleased, for there was welcome and cordiality everywhere, even from those who disagreed with me utterly. My visit fitted in with my election to the presidentship of the Indian National Congress, and perhaps it was this that gave me an importance I would not have otherwise deserved. Perhaps to many people I became a symbol for a while of the suffering that my countrymen and countrywomen had undergone in recent years, and there was a vague desire to offer something in the nature of reparation. I was a poor enough symbol, for large numbers of others have gone through far greater ordeals; but I was present in the flesh and others were far away, and I sensed among many I met in England a kind of vague pricking of conscience at the doings of British authority in India.

It was very pleasant to meet with all this friendliness and interest in India and her problems, and yet it seemed to me that the interest was largely confined to special groups and individuals, and behind them lay the vast mass of intelligent as well as unintelligent British opinion which was tired and bored over the Indian question. They had had enough of it, other and much more interesting and important events were happening in the world and they wanted to forget about India, just as, psychologists tell us, our subconscious self makes us forget many an unpleasant occurrence which we would rather not remember. Some took comfort in the thought that the India Act being passed, India was out of the picture for many years to come. Others, not so sanguine, yet did not know what they could do; it was a damnably intricate and confusing problem, and it was best to ignore it.

These reactions were perhaps natural; they were not difficult to understand. It was not the intricacy of the problem that baffled, for it was simple enough in its essence, but the fact that any effective solution inevitably came up against the whole structure of British political and economic life, and the complex of ideas and long-cherished prejudices which the British people have held in regard to India. To solve the problem meant the knocking out of the bottom of that structure and the smothering of those ancient ideas and prejudices. It meant the ending of the imperialist tradition and the winding up of the empire. So attention was diverted to the failings, real or imaginary, of the Indian

people, to the supposed fact that India was not a nation at all with all its races, castes and languages, that it was largely illiterate, and of course to the communal problem. Much could be said about these various matters which would go to show that they were, after all, not so important as they were thought to be. But quite apart from their truth or importance, other facts stand out: the terrible poverty of India, the vast unemployment among all classes, the problems of land and industry, the continuing repression and denial of civil liberty by which the British Government seeks to convince us that we are being given a large dose of self-government. These problems cannot be tackled by protecting the very interests that create them and flourish on them.

The Conservative reaction was simple enough, and its very simplicity gave it an air of romance. They had few doubts or difficulties, no complexes over India. For an Indian it was a little difficult to discuss this question with them, in spite of their amiability, for we started from entirely different premises and looked different ways. We could find no common ground to stand on, no agreement to form the basis of argument. The British Empire was good, very good and beneficial to all concerned, and bound to endure. Unhappily it was surrounded by evil elements, full of spite and jealousy, who created difficulties in the smooth working of this ideal institution. If these objectionable elements could be made to see straight or be suppressed, all would be well. Some of the left-wing Conservatives were a little troubled at the close association of their party with all the reactionary and feudal elements in India; they even thought that some economic changes were necessary. But, on the whole, these ideas did not affect the essential serenity of their outlook.

Those who might be called Liberals did not differ greatly, but they were troubled more at what was happening in India, and vague fears of the future prevented them from enjoying the calm of peaceful contemplation which might otherwise have been theirs. Bred up in the traditions of civil liberty and democracy, they felt a little uneasy at the ruthless suppression in India of much they had in England. But only a little. For India was different and far away, and it was possible to still the qualms of conscience and principle by the consoling thought that, but for the repression, India might go to pieces and be converted into a sea of blood. As for democracy, were there not substantial beginnings of it in the India Act with its wider franchise, and safeguards and special powers have a way of falling into desuetude under democratic institutions? So all was well, and it was possible, with a certain measure of equanimity, to accept the present position in India, and at the same

time to condemn whole-heartedly the dictatorships and suppression of freedom in Germany, Russia, Italy, the Balkans, and elsewhere.

More interesting because they were more complicated were the reactions of the Labour groups. They varied of course greatly from the communist, looking forward to social revolution, to the trade union leader, vaguely wishing well to India and everybody but moving in a narrow sphere of wages and hours of work and the building up of an organization which might gain a majority in Parliament and lead to a Labour Government. It was not clear what would happen when this desirable result was achieved.

There were many individuals in the labour movement, as well as groups, who had pinned their faith on socialism and who were prepared to apply these principles to India. They realized that imperialism was a barrier to all real progress in both India and England, and in the ultimate interests of both this must go. It was easy for me to discuss our mutual problems with them with this basis of agreement. But for the Labour Party as a whole there was no such realization, and even when an uncomfortable feeling came that some such fundamental change was inevitable, it was sternly suppressed, and as practical men and women they faced the problem of the next Labour Government. With all their dislike for it they moved in the orbit of imperialism, and felt powerless to step out of it. Events might of course force their hands, but the initiative was not likely to come from them. They were unhappy about the past record of their party in regard to India and they wanted to make amends, but within that circle of empire that encompassed them there was not much room for movement. And there was always the fear that any stepping out of that circle might endanger their electoral prospects and lessen their reputation for practical and respectable statesmanship.

The Labour Party has moved to the right in recent years; the drift is likely to continue. Even in earlier days its record in India was indistinguishable from that of other parties and governments, and it gathered to itself the deep distrust of the Indian people. It will not be easy to remove this and, even with all the goodwill that many of its members undoubtedly possess for India, it can hardly do much to regain the confidence of the Indian people, unless it moves out of the circle that closes round it and makes it afraid of its own professions. A Labour Government may come back sometime in the future, and much is likely to happen in India before then. Even when it comes, it will be nervous and lacking confidence in itself; it will be afraid of all manner of vested interests, and the House of Lords will be there to see that it behaves.

Only international catastrophes and major events in India or elsewhere will shake it out of its lethargy.

Very interesting were many non-party men whom I met, sensitive men who though not wedded to any well-defined political policy were keenly aware of the world's disorder and of approaching catastrophe, and anxious to do their best to avert it. India was a secondary question in their minds and they were absorbed by dangers of war and the crisis of modern civilization. Mostly their approach was psychological and humanitarian, and I felt drawn towards it. And yet I felt there was something lacking in it; it was vague and idealistic without much reference to hard and cruel reality, and it did not promise any definite results. Nevertheless a widespread realization of the folly and evil in the present-day world and an ardent desire to end them was in itself a significant and hopeful sign.

The problem of India is an essential part of the world crisis, for India is the classic and most important symbol of modern imperialism. Within the fabric of imperialism there can be no solution of that crisis; it will have to go, root and branch, and the sooner this is realized and worked for, the nearer we shall all be to a solution of the world's difficulties. That seems to me the only way, and it is the way of socialism. With that realization will come mutual confidence and cooperation between the progressive elements of India and England. Such problems as remain—and there will be many, for the period of transition is always full of difficulty—can then be faced and solved with mutual consideration and with a view to healing the world's ills. Otherwise there can only be continuous conflict and friction, with occasional eruptions bringing suffering and misery to large numbers.

Perhaps conflict is inevitable and we cannot escape it. Under present conditions it cannot be avoided, for the policy the British Government has pursued in India is a continuous invitation to conflict. But even if conflict continues, cannot it be made a little more civilized than what we have had in the past? Is it not possible to end or tone down at least the fascist methods of brutal suppression of a sensitive people struggling for their freedom, which the British Government has been pursuing interminably for years past?

Whatever the future may hold, I shall carry back with me to India the knowledge that there is a fund of goodwill in England for the Indian struggle, and we have many true comrades here who stand for the same socialist ideal as many of us do and we can work together for a common cause.

52. The Way to Peace¹

In a recent speech in the House of Commons, Mr. Lloyd George pleaded for the "have-nots" amongst the great imperialist powers—"have nots" in the sense that they do not possess colonies to supply them with raw materials and provide sheltered markets for their manufactured goods.² From a strictly imperialist point of view, perhaps there was some force in his argument; bribery on a big enough scale might lessen the war-hunger of these "have-not" powers for a while and relieve the immediate tension in Europe. It might also of course whet the appetite and increase the demand and convince the peoples and the governments concerned that threat of and preparation for war pay. Whatever the immediate result might be, the ultimate result could hardly be doubted—the increase in rivalry between these powers and inevitable conflicts. That has been the history of the growth of modern imperialism, and as fresh colonial areas have come under its domination, these conflicts have increased. The fact that science can provide food and leisure and an ever-increasing standard for all does not, under the peculiar system we live in, lessen these conflicts but only creates more unemployment and international friction.

As I listened to Mr. Lloyd George, it struck me as very odd that he should feel so keenly for the unhappy state of the "have-not" powers and yet ignore completely the colonial countries and their peoples. Have they no rights in the matter or no say in it? But even apart from the rights and the moralities, is it imagined that peace will be ensured and entrenched by a sharing of the booty by the imperialist powers?

So long as there are "haves" and "have-nots" friction and conflict will continue, and it is desirable to put an end to this state of affairs. But it seems a mockery to call powerful nations "have-nots" and ignore the real "have-not" countries and classes which are being dominated over and exploited. If Mr. Lloyd George's argument is to be carried to its logical conclusion, the first thing to be done is to equalize from below upwards, put an end to the exploitation of one country or people or class by another, and thus remove the causes of conflict. But that of course would mean an ending of capitalist imperialism.

1. Lausanne, 24 February 1936. First published in *Time and Tide*, 1936. Reprinted in *India and the World*, (London, 1936), pp. 218-225.
2. On 5 February 1936 Lloyd George argued that while Britain, France, Belgium, Portugal and Holland had "great tropical territories", Italy and Germany had none and world peace was impossible unless their "claims were reconsidered".

Many pacifists and others who desire ardently to prevent war imagine that the way to bring this about is by satisfying the greed of certain European nations and generally preaching goodwill to all, but otherwise maintaining the *status quo*. It does not seem to be realized by them that it is this very *status quo* that produces ill will and conflict and is bound to lead to war. Africa may still be a helpless victim of aggression, but it is not likely to remain so for ever. India and China and several other colonial and semi-colonial countries are even now not so weak and helpless, in spite of their present condition. They can never tolerate willingly their subjection and exploitation, and they will struggle against them with all their strength. So also, as we see all around us, the classes that are exploited for the benefit of the upper strata. The *status quo* has to go throughout the world before war goes and the causes of war.

Ultimately of course this involves something more than a political or even social change; it involves a change in our habits and beliefs and instincts, and that is a terribly difficult process. But even this change in our beliefs and instincts is not likely to come till a suitable environment for it has been created.

How are these vital changes to be brought about? Gerald Heard³ tells us that the approach must be psychological, we must convince people that it is to their interest to have the change, we must hold a world conference in order to lay the foundations of the new era of peace and plenty. Few people will deny the importance of the psychological approach and the attempt to convert others. Facts are with us, science, reason, decency, the "spirit of the Age", enlightened self-interest, all help us. And in no event can we get a move on unless we have converted a sufficient number of people.

Granting all that, an insuperable barrier remains. It is perfectly true that the world would be a much better place to live in for all of us if we could change it to fit in with the latest developments of science and provide full scope for growth to all countries and individuals. But it is equally true that certain groups and classes which dominate today will lose that privileged position and, especially, the period of transition will be hard for them. They will not be convinced of the beauty of the new order or willing to accept the change. It is possible to convert individuals and even induce them to put up with loss and suffering for a larger cause, but such a conversion is not known to take place in groups and classes as a whole. They move in their own rigid ideologies and

3. (1889-1971); British writer; his works include *The Ascent of Humanity*, *The Social Substance of Religion* and *Science in the Making*.

refuse to open their minds to anything which injures their group interests. Being in the seats of power they use that advantageous position to influence mass opinion in their own favour in a variety of ways and the psychological approach is thwarted by them and often neutralized.

It is hard enough to get over this difficulty in approaching even others than the groups whose self-interest is affected. But what of these groups themselves? Are we to wait indefinitely till each group and each individual concerned is converted to our ideals and objectives? And are we likely to succeed in this endeavour even after a long lapse of time? Meanwhile danger grows, and the crisis might overwhelm us while we wait and pray.

To take an instance. Must we in India convert the class or order of Indian princes to democracy and socialism before we can set our house in order? Granting (though it is a difficult supposition) that some individuals among them might be so converted, it is an inconceivable notion that the group will agree to give up its feudal, autocratic position. Today most of them treat their states as their private domains where they can do what they will and can draw upon the entire state revenue for their private needs and pleasures. They will inevitably have to give all this up in any new order and they will never accept the change willingly.

Similar considerations apply to imperialist powers and their subject countries. There is much significance in the fact that the British Government is today the stoutest upholder of undiluted autocracy in the Indian states, and has allied itself to all the most reactionary and obscurantist elements in India.

The psychological approach, though admirable and worth stressing, does not thus seem to be quite enough. Something more is necessary to induce the recalcitrant groups to accept or submit to the change. That something is pressure or some kind of coercion, and the bringing about of circumstances which make it more worthwhile for the vested interests to accept change than to suffer greater loss in an attempt to avoid it.

The application of coercion immediately conflicts with the psychological approach. We are back again where we were. Is there no way out? Cannot that coercion be applied in such a way as to minimize the fear and hatred and greed which accompany conflict and neutralize even the results of victory? Is it possible to have that psychological approach and yet have the coercion?

That, I take it, is the real problem. Pacifists, as a rule, seem to avoid it and move in an ineffective sphere. Inevitably they become upholders of an unjust system and support the very causes that lead

to war. An ardent apostle of peace, a champion of sanctions against Italy, who has received the Nobel Peace Prize,⁴ tells us in India that we are narrow-minded and perverted because we do not see the beauty of the British Empire and seek to walk out of it.

I write under a certain disadvantage because I have not seen all the articles which Gerald Heard has written on this subject, and do not know what his immediate practical steps are. So far, I have failed to discover any such practical or effective steps in the proposals of the pacifists. I can hardly imagine that the proposal to hold a world peace conference will, under present conditions, lead to anything.

The only practical solution of the problem came from Gandhi. Whether that was a final solution or not remains to be seen, but it did combine the Sermon on the Mount with effective action. In considering his methods one should not be diverted by a discussion of his views on science, or modern industry, or asceticism, or birth control. The technique and the method of approach stand quite apart from those particular views though they might sometimes be coloured by them. That approach is the psychological approach, the refusal to subordinate means to an end, the constant endeavour to lessen ill will and fear, the continuous willingness to make friends of his opponents, and yet at the same time adoption of effective and dynamic action. For it must be remembered that in spite of the abundance of "nons" in his movement (nonviolence, noncooperation, etc.), it was not a negative, passive affair. It was an active, dynamic, energizing drive which lifted a whole nation out of a morass of demoralization and helplessness, the inevitable result of a long period of subjection, and removed partially at least the inferiority complex from which it suffered, and did all this with the least amount of ill will against the opposite party. Of course there were lapses and bitterness and hatred, but the surprising thing is that they were so few and that within a short term of years he could have worked this astounding change.

The effect on the Indian people was very marked, and that in itself was success enough. Equally interesting, though very different, was the effect on the British people. Individuals apart, this reaction was one of increasing hostility. Partly this was due to the suppression and distortion of Indian news in England. Fleet Street declared a ban on India, except when the antics of a maharaja were prominently figured. While millions in India were living through a nightmare of horror, most people in England no doubt imagined that all was well in this bright jewel of the British crown. But news did occasionally trickle

4. Arthur Henderson was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 1934.

through and, in any event, informed people always had a fair notion of what was happening. Even so, these informed and intelligent people, generous and liberal in their ideas, freedom-loving when remote people and other interests were concerned, became more and more hostile to India and her people and tolerated conditions there, of their own government's making, which shocked them nearer home. It was a very striking example of one's own interests perverting one's sense of values and suppressing the moral sense.

In India the same reaction took place among British officials. But they were in the thick of events and could not ignore them or pass academical judgments. So they went from one brutality to another, progressively deteriorated, and what had been an abnormality, hesitatingly indulged in, became a normal daily occurrence.

Thus we see that the psychological approach did not have a very marked effect on the opposite party. It was smothered by those in power and places of authority and not allowed to reach wider groups, and even when it did so reach, the real or imaginary interests of the group prevented it from producing its expected result. Indeed the idea that the group was being placed morally in the wrong produced the strongest irritation and anger and led to the conviction that there must be something deep and diabolical about this seemingly moral approach.

Perhaps it is too soon to judge. But meanwhile all over the world the clouds gather and pacifists talk vaguely of goodwill and refuse to face realities. They will have to do something more if they wish to be effective.

53. A Constituent Assembly for India¹

The India Act has been imposed on India in spite of the vehement opposition of all politically-minded Indians.² The provincial part of it will probably come into effect early next year and presumably the

1. Lausanne, 25 February 1936. *The Hindu*, 4 April 1936. First published in *The India Bulletin*.
2. The policy of the Congress towards the reforms contained in the 1935 Act was enunciated as far back as June 1934 when the Working Committee passed a resolution condemning the White Paper and stated that the only satisfactory alternative was a constitution drawn up by a constituent assembly.

Congress, as well as other organisations, will combat it in various ways. The federal part is still very much in the air and even its sponsors and partisans tell us that it will take another two or three years before it takes shape. Two or three years are a short period in the life of a nation but they are long and full of possible happenings and vast changes in the present state of the world and of India. So it is quite possible that this federal structure may remain still-born, and, if so, the rest of the India Act may soon follow it into oblivion. Very few will regret this and the vast majority of the people of India will rejoice that this terrible burden has gone.

What then is the way out? If the world as a whole or India sees and experiences great upheavals, political and economic, no one can say what the result will be. When vast and unknown forces are let loose the best laid plans go awry, and sometimes the fresh writing has to be done on a more or less clean slate. So we may not lay down what will happen when such an upheaval has occurred.

But if there is no such upheaval, what then? The Congress has stated that the only solution is by means of a constituent assembly, elected on an adult suffrage, which will draw up the constitution for a free India. That is the only way to give effect to the wishes of the people of India; that is the democratic way. That way also helps greatly in the solution of the communal problem.

No solution that is drawn up by the British Parliament or any other outside authority and imposed on India can ever be agreed to or bring peace. If the Indian people are to decide democratically they can only do so through some form of a constituent assembly. But such an assembly must be a real one, fully representing the masses and with power to decide and give effect to its decisions. A so-called all parties conference or an assembly elected on a limited franchise will be useless. This will reflect the communal and other divisions of the upper classes and prevent issues affecting the masses from coming up.

If the masses are fully represented, inevitably economic issues affecting them will come to the forefront and superficial problems, like the communal one, will lose importance. New and vital forces will be released, drawing their strength from below, and these will seek to solve India's problems in terms of economic reality.

The Congress demand for a constituent assembly is thus a vital one and we must work for its realisation.

54. The Soviet Union¹

Probably on no other subject have so many books been published in modern times as on Soviet Russia. One wonders at the abundance of them, they come out unceasingly from the European and American publishing houses (Nazi land and fascist Italy excepted) and disappear in millions of libraries and homes. And still the demand exceeds the supply.

Why is this so? Why do Russia and the other territories of the U.S.S.R. attract and fascinate or sometimes repel? Whatever our reactions may be, and whether we are intellectually inclined or emotionally influenced, we cannot cast out the spell. Partly this pull is due to disillusion with the old world and its ways, a desire to escape from a system which has no real hope to offer; even more so we are drawn by the building up before our very eyes of a new civilization, so different from the old, with different values and standards, new motives, hopes and desires. We talk of the Russian experiment, but already it is something much more than that; it has vast achievement to its credit and the history of the world has been changed thereby.

We stand at the threshold of a new era—that is a commonplace oft-repeated by almost everybody today. Yet few realise it fully or understand its implications and while they talk glibly of change and transition, keep in the same old mental ruts and refuse to look around. That new era is not a dream of the future; it is the actuality of the present in the U.S.S.R. With all its defects and mistakes and ruthlessness, it is taking visible, vital shape there, stumbling occasionally but ever marching forward.

Of this vast enterprise, so full of lessons for all of us, it is very difficult for most of us to form an adequate conception. A few fortunates may see with their own eyes, the rest must depend on books and on the intelligence and goodwill of the authorities who ban books in India. Unhappily that intelligence and goodwill are singularly lacking in our ruling classes, and the wide net of the censorship keeps out of our ken not only most books on Russia but much of the new literature which is stimulating the best minds of Europe and America today. The man of the sword and the ordinance does not think in terms of the book or of the clash of ideas. It is doubtful if he thinks at all; he acts.

1. Lausanne, 25 February 1936. Foreword to *Soviet Sidelights* by M. R. Masani, published in 1936.

I have so far read only a few chapters of Comrade Masani's little book, as they came out in periodicals. I liked his fresh, intimate approach and was interested in his reaction to this new world. I think such books have a definite value, especially in India, where knowledge of the U.S.S.R. is terribly limited. They do not tell us very much about it or put a full picture before us. They are not meant to. But they do give us glimpses of the masses of a vast country putting their shoulders to the wheel and pushing ahead, and building and creating, and obliterating many of the black spots which have disfigured our world too long. Those glimpses are helpful; they provide some background to our thinking.

For the more serious student there is no lack of books and those who are fortunate will go to that wonderful picture of the new Soviet civilization which Sydney and Beatrice Webb² have drawn up with all their amazing learning, industry and scientific insight. But for most of us I am afraid such books are beyond reach. They should at least read the lighter books, like Masani's, and provoke their minds to serious thought about Russia, the world, and India.

2. *Soviet Communism—A New Civilisation*, published in 1935.

55. The Example of Ireland¹

Ireland has often been in our thoughts in India and we have drawn inspiration from her unquenchable desire for liberty surviving long centuries of conflict and fierce repression by a powerful imperialism. India and Ireland differ in many ways but we have had to face the same imperialism and inevitably we have drawn closer to each other. So long as imperialism endures there can be no peace or freedom for vast masses of people. Only when imperialism and the social system, of which it is the modern representative and upholder, are removed can we build a new order. We shall follow as we have done in the past with the deepest sympathy the efforts of our Irish comrades to rid themselves of all imperialist interference.

1. Message to the London branch of the Irish Republican Congress, 25 February 1936. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 5 March 1936.

56. To Romain Rolland¹

Montreux
March 4th, 1936

My dear Monsieur Rolland,

I am very grateful to you for your message of sympathy.

I appreciated deeply the letter you sent me a week ago.² I intended writing to you more fully on the subject but under the circumstances you will, I am sure, forgive me if I do not do so. I shall however carry your letter with me to India and convey your message to my countrymen. If I may say so, I am entirely at one with you in your general outlook as to what should be done. I hope sincerely that we may be able to move in that direction in India. But, as you are aware, we have to face great difficulties and I do not know how matters will shape themselves. But the thought of your good wishes and blessings will keep our courage up and cheer us in our dark days.

I realise the importance of the great World Congress for Peace—the *Rassemblement Universel pour la Paix*—which will be held next September in Geneva.³ I very much hope that the Indian Congress will be able to take part in it.⁴

I shall convey your message of affection to Gandhi and other friends.

I am leaving for India day after tomorrow afternoon.

Again thanking you and with my homage and affectionate regards to you and Madame and Mademoiselle Rolland,

I am,
Yours very sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. In his letter of 25 February 1936, Romain Rolland, as president of the "World Committee for the Struggle Against War and Fascism", had requested Jawaharlal for his support, and that of the Congress, to a World Congress for Peace which was to be convened at Geneva in September.

3. It was in fact held at Brussels from 3 to 6 September 1936.

4. It was attended by Krishna Menon on behalf of the Congress.

REACTIONS TO THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Jawaharlal Nehru's *Autobiography* was published in London in the spring of 1936. This section contains some of the correspondence which followed the publication.



1. To the Editor, The Leader¹

Unao

June 8, 1936

Sir,

In the Bombay letter which appears in your issue dated June 7th, your correspondent has done me the honour to refer to certain remarks of mine in my *Autobiography* in the following terms:

His remarks about the Liberals are not only offensive; they are false. They are downright lies. They are stupid lies!

I shall be grateful if you, Sir, or your correspondent will point out to me what these stupid and downright lies are so that I might be given a chance to mend my ways.

A little earlier in the same letter your correspondent refers to my being asked "many inconvenient questions at some meetings, particularly in Poona, about the extremely offensive remarks he had made in his *Autobiography* regarding several persons and parties."

I should like to be enlightened about these meetings and questions also. So far as I can remember the talented editor of *The Servant of India* pointed out to me, in the course of discussion about civil liberties, that his paper had always taken a strong line in regard to civil liberties, and therefore my sweeping criticism of the Liberals in regard to this matter was not justified. I informed Mr. Vaze² that I had not been able to see his paper for a long time past and I was sorry if I had done him an injustice. I had judged from the well-known pronouncements of the leaders of the Liberal Party. That my judgment was not a wrong one has recently been demonstrated by the attitude taken and the answers sent by some of these leading Liberals in regard to the formation of a civil liberties union in India.

Yours etc.,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. *The Leader*, 12 June 1936.

2. S.G. Vaze (1885-1964); for a long time member of the Servants of India Society and its vice-president, 1951-64; edited several journals including *The Servant of India*, a weekly published from Poona; connected with the political movement in the Indian states.

2. To Rabindranath Tagore¹

Allahabad
June 10, 1936

Dear Gurudeva,

My sister has sent me your letter.² Need I say how proud and grateful I feel to have your commendation in such generous language? Many friends have used words of praise for my book, some have criticised it. But what you have written goes to my heart and cheers and strengthens me. With your blessings and goodwill I feel I can face a world of opposition. The burdens become lighter and the road straighter.

With homage and affection,

Yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Vol. 29, 1963-64, p. 102.
2. Rabindranath wrote about Jawaharlal's *Autobiography*: "Through all its details there runs a deep current of humanity which overpasses the tangles of facts and leads us to the person who is greater than his deeds and truer than his surroundings."

3. To the Editor, The Servant of India¹

Mussoorie
13.6.36

Sir,

I am grateful to you for your courtesy in sending me many of the old issues of *The Servant of India*. I have read the articles and editorial notes in them with pleasure and profit. And in reading some of these articles I have felt that the hiatus between your way of thinking and mine was not so great as I had imagined.

You tell us that "while the members of the (Liberal) Party will utilise the constitution for what it is worth, they will ever bear in mind the overmastering fact that the constitution deserves to be put on the scrap-heap and will work with that end in view. Nor are they unmindful of

1. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.

the fact that a better constitution is almost impossible of achievement by constitutional means... The British Government has, as it were, served a notice on the Indian people, and particularly on the Liberal Party who pin their faith to constitutional means, that constitutionalism is at an end... Whenever possible the Liberal Party will try to give a good spanking to a reactionary administration composed of all the vested interests, as nine to ten it will be. The Party will on occasions even engineer daring, decisive coups." (Jan. 9, 1936).

In an earlier issue (Aug. 22, 1935) you stress that "we do not want self-government merely for emotional satisfaction, in order that we may enjoy the feeling that Indians now rule in the place of the Britishers. In fact even such a feeling would be illegitimate, for behind the facade of Indian self-rule that we may succeed in putting up there will always be British control. But a mere change of masters, even if it were real, would satisfy nobody. We want self-government only as a means of introducing fundamental changes in society, as a means of abolishing privilege, as a means of transferring power from the ruling class, whether white or brown, to the broad masses of people, as a means of establishing a democratic and equalitarian regime. If our self-government is such as to foreclose all these momentous issues, as on Mr. Jayakar's hypothesis² it does, we have no use for it... We want them (our legislators) to sponsor drastic measures for the creation of a new social order and challenge all the vested interests and the Governor and the Governor-General together to do their worst. To make the constitution successful is not our objective. Our objective is and must be to revamp our social and economic structure, and if even in taking one forward step in this long and weary process we come into collision with the holders of power and privilege, as we are afraid will be the case, for such collision we must be prepared, whatever the reaction of it may be on the constitution."

My own views on these issues have received sufficient publicity. They go much further. But I recognise with pleasure a certain similarity in mental outlook and a desire to face the real problem of vested interests, whether foreign or Indian. That problem, in the shape of the Indian states, has received continuous attention in *The Servant of India* and the attitude taken by it has certainly been in advance of some sections of Congress opinion in the past.

2. Jayakar pleaded for working the constitution "in a modest fashion." He believed that by working it "in a spirit of compromise and conventions the genuine interests of the country would not suffer."

In reading these articles, with their clear though restrained analysis, I find it difficult to understand how the writers stop suddenly and refrain from drawing the inevitable conclusions which follow. They approach them, they hint at them, and yet they stop short of them, both in regard to the political issue of national freedom and the social issue of removing vested interest and privilege. We are told that because of the Government of India Act constitutionalism is almost at an end. Why 'almost' and why just because of the Government of India Act, though that Act might make the issue clearer? Is not a narrow constitutionalism and legalism, which has been the policy of the Liberal Party, inherently and always out of place when we have to meet the challenge of foreign domination or of entrenched vested interest? It was the recognition of this fact in the political sphere by the Congress that made the Congress, despite many failings, develop rapidly into a powerful and effective organisation. It was the refusal to admit it, even in a small degree, by the Liberal Party that made that party, despite many virtues, ineffective and weak and completely out of touch with mass sentiment. The further recognition of this fact in the social sphere of vested interests will inevitably bring the broad masses even more into the national movement and make that movement irresistible.

The amazing passivity of the Liberal Party (quite apart from direct action) during all these years of storm and stress in India has been the consequence, I feel, of that deadening creed of legalism. Action, and often brave and heroic action, has saved the Congress and put it on a pedestal in India, even though in thought it was often backward.

The attitude of *The Servant of India* in regard to civil liberty, I gladly admit, has been one of consistent opposition to its suppression. But I am not so sure that it represents in this matter, or in many others, the Liberal Party as a whole. Something more, surely, than occasional verbal protest was demanded by the occurrences of the past six years. And that protest was often a qualified one. Was it not possible for non-Congress groups, who felt on this question of civil liberty, to take steps to institute enquiries into the grave executive excesses in the Frontier Province, in Bengal and elsewhere? There was much that could be done, even under the abnormal conditions then prevailing, to draw the country's and the world's attention to the horror that prevailed in India.

Without indulging in any form of direct action people could have dissociated themselves from too close an association with the government or high officials. There was no such attempt at a gesture which would have had a moral value except, as far as I remember, in 1930

when some members of the Legislative Assembly resigned because of the repression.³

Association in the Round Table Conference was a gesture in favour of the government which was crushing India. Even at the R.T.C. no effective or continuous protest was raised on this ground.

Ever since the early years of this century the declared policy of the government has been "to rally the moderates" to its side and, in conflicts between the government and large sections of the people, leading Liberals have held high executive offices and been to all outward showing part and parcel of the government. They have undertaken responsibility for repression, and for the promulgation of the Seditious Meetings Act and similar measures. Individual Liberal leaders in the Assembly and elsewhere have supported government in not releasing political prisoners, convicts or detenus.

It is not a question, so far as I am concerned, of the Liberal Party or any other party, but of a certain political and social outlook, which I consider reactionary and harmful. I am sure, and I have stated so in my *Autobiography*, that there are many in the Congress who have this reactionary outlook. I am equally sure that there are individuals in the Liberal Party who dislike this and who feel embarrassed by their reactionary colleagues. But there can be no doubt that the Congress today does represent, as a whole, the most advanced outlook, apart from labour and other groups more or less allied to it, and is the only effective organisation in India.

I have yet another difficulty. How far does the attitude of *The Servant of India* represent that of many leading Liberals—of Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad,⁴ Sir Cowasji Jehangir,⁵ Mr. C.Y. Chintamani and others, or of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru who, though not a member of the party, still represents, I take it, the liberal tradition in India? Do they accept that constitutionalism is almost at an end and the new Act must be scrapped? Do they agree that "fundamental changes in society" are necessary "as a means of abolishing privilege, as a means of transferring power from the ruling class, whether white or brown, to the broad masses of the people, as a means of establishing a democratic and equalitarian regime?" Are they out "to

3. Madan Mohan Malaviya and Vithalbhai Patel were among the members who had resigned.

4. (1865-1947); leading lawyer of Bombay; member of the Hunter committee of inquiry, 1919; leading member of the Liberal Party.

5. (1879-1962); leading industrialist of Bombay; president, National Liberal Federation of India, 1936.

revamp our social and economic structure" and "challenge all the vested interests"?

I would gladly believe this but facts seem to be against it. They associate themselves closely with those very vested interests, white and brown, and oppose even a consideration of such vital social changes. In the manifesto⁶ of the 21 businessmen of Bombay there were several noted Liberal leaders standing shoulder to shoulder with several persons whom you, Sir, have frequently criticised for their reactionary and pro-government attitude. Do you agree with the sentiments contained in this manifesto, political or social? And do you think that the answers I have received from Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar⁷ and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru,⁸ which have been approved by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad and other well-known Liberals of Bombay, represent the correct attitude in regard to civil liberties?

This letter has outgrown all reasonable bounds and I crave your indulgence for this. I would beg of you to believe that I write in no carping spirit of criticism. I am not much concerned with parties and individuals but more so with ideas and principles and the action that should follow from them. I think it is time that all of us should try to think straight if we are to act straight. In my *Autobiography* I have endeavoured to give frank expression to my feelings in the hope that this will help in a real consideration of the issues before us. It was not my intention to offend anyone, and if unhappily I have succeeded in doing so, that is my misfortune. But that risk had to be taken. We dare not ignore realities for the sake of superficial gestures and phrases conveying an unmeaning politeness. True courtesy requires a probing of the real issues and an attempt to understand each other.

I am etc.,
Jawaharlal Nehru

6. This manifesto criticised Jawaharlal for preaching socialism.

7. In reply to Jawaharlal's circular (see *post*, section 6, item 6) Sivaswamy Aiyar had argued that the subversive and terrorist policy of a few was the cause of the restriction of civil liberties.

8. For Sapru's answer see *post*, section 6, item 8.

4. To Ellen Wilkinson¹

As at Allahabad
June 15, 1936

Dear Ellen,

About a month and a half ago, or perhaps more, I sent you an airmail letter. I have a feeling that perhaps this did not reach you. If so, you must have wondered at my not replying to the letter² that you had sent me in which you had described your all-night reading of my book.

I am writing therefore to make sure, for I am distressed at the thought that you might be under the impression that I have not answered your last letter.

I have been having a fairly strenuous time, simultaneously carrying on war at various fronts. It is a fatiguing business and for the moment I am here at Mussoorie for 10 days to recover a little from physical exhaustion.

The position here is intriguing enough. The news you may have of it in the English press is likely to mislead, but of course India must inevitably keep very much in the background with all the big things that are happening round about you.

You might be interested in an example of the activities of the Government of India's publicity department.³ The enclosed sheet will give you some idea of it.

With all good wishes,

Yours,
Jawaharlal

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. She wrote congratulating Jawaharlal on his *Autobiography*, which was not only indispensable for understanding the Indian situation, but would also give a great impetus to the socialist movement in England.

3. See *post*, section 4, item 40.

5. An Author Replies¹

For an author to enter into argument with his critics is an unbecoming procedure. He has had his say in his book, and it is right that they

1. Statement issued at Mussoorie, 16 June 1936. *The Leader*, 22 June 1936. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 16-23.

should have their say. For me to venture to criticize the critics of my *Autobiography* would be almost unpardonable, for reviewers both in England and India have treated this book with a generosity and goodwill which have been overwhelming.

But I am challenged by Mr. N.C. Kelkar and other friends and answers are demanded of me to a number of questions that they have framed.² I have absolutely no desire to enter the lists on this issue with Mr. Kelkar, whom I have long respected, or others. But as I am asked questions, I cannot remain wholly silent.

What is my *Autobiography*? It is not meant to be record of all the important events of the past few years. It is a record of my own thoughts and moods and how they were affected by external happenings. I endeavoured to make this a truthful record of my own mental development. How far I succeeded in doing so, it is not for me to say. But the important thing is not what happened, but how it struck me and what impression it produced on me. That is the test of the truth or otherwise of the book.

Of course if my own impression of what happened was at considerable variance with actuality, this would knock the bottom out of any argument that I might advance, and my own mind and doubts would be based on falsehood. I would isolate myself from reality and probably shrivel up. Thus the truth or otherwise of events as recorded in the book is of importance.

But still I would venture to say that the primary test of the book is psychological. It has given me no little pleasure to find that many of my reviewers have proceeded on this basis and some English friends even, who are opposed wholly to my politics, have gained a certain psychological insight into the mind and soul of our national movement. For though I wrote as an individual about an individual, to some extent I may claim to have represented the mental conflicts of large numbers of others who worked in our freedom movement. True understanding between friends as well as opponents comes only from this psychological insight, as between opposing groups it is frightfully hard, if not impossible, to gain this insight.

I would beg therefore that my book be considered primarily from this aspect; all others are secondary.

2. Kelkar in his statement of 5 June 1936, published in *The Tribune* of 6 June 1936, took exception to Jawaharlal's criticism of the Responsivist Party. He challenged Jawaharlal to give "specific instances about Responsivists cooperating with government by supporting repression."

My second request would be that the entire wood be considered as a whole and that we should not lose ourselves in the trees. Inevitably, in a great country like India and during a powerful nationalist movement, various sets of ideas emerge and fight for mastery. These ideas are bigger and apart from the individuals or leaders who express them, and as far as possible we should consider them as ideas and not merely as appendages to persons whom we may like or dislike. Thus in our political movement during the past few years there was a certain Congress ideology, a Liberal ideology, a Responsivist ideology, as well as others. Today the economic and social issue having forced itself into the forefront, other sets of ideas are producing a ferment and a conflict in men's minds. In considering these various sets and complexes of ideas we can say, regardless of the individuals who hold them, that a particular one is progressive or harmful, it leads to independence or is reactionary. I hold that the Liberal and Responsivist ideologies are definitely reactionary and harmful, and they inevitably involve a co-operation with British imperialism. Thus instead of helping us to march along the road to freedom, they strengthen the hold of British imperialism. This has nothing to do with the individuals who may hold these views; I may respect them in their personal capacities and have affection for them and admire their character and courage. But still I may hold that they err politically and give the wrong lead. The Congress, I think, has given a straighter and a definitely anti-imperialist lead, and though in some matters it has been reactionary at times, it has, I believe, pushed us towards freedom. Believing this, I have given it my allegiance and worked for it to the best of my ability.

If these are my definite opinions must I not express them for fear of offending some people by my criticism of their views? That would be a futile and a puerile policy, unbecoming in a public man. We who dabble in public affairs and seek to change the destinies of millions dare not remain quiet on vital issues. I claim the right of free criticism of public policies. I gladly acknowledge this right in others who may be opposed to my views. Only thus can we have glimpses of the truth and hammer out a right policy. But of course such criticism should be without malice or ill will.

It was with this viewpoint that I wrote my book. I may have failed to live up to the ideal aimed at, but the book does represent my own carefully considered views on the various ideologies and policies before the country. There may be minor errors here and there but they do not affect the main argument. I might add that some extraordinary references have appeared in the press to the effect that I have been going about apologising for my book and for its so-called inaccuracies.

I have done no such thing and I am yet unaware of any major error in it.

Members of the Responsivist Party, I am told, sign the Congress creed of independence. Personally, though I welcome this, I am not prepared to accept that this is a final proof in their case, or in the case of Congressmen generally, of the acceptance of the ideology of independence, as I understand it. It is well known that there are some Congressmen who are not terribly keen on independence and who seek continually to tone it down. The real test comes in action and in our day to day activities.

How far my own ideology of independence governs the Congress I cannot say. But I know it is widely prevalent in Congress ranks. I believe that it is essentially different from the ideas of political freedom that Liberals and Responsivists, as a body, give expression to. This Liberal and Responsivist conception of Indian freedom, though opposed to British control in India, seems to me to move within the orbit of British imperialism. Hence, though disliking it and seeking to rid themselves of it, they in effect help it and strengthen it. They co-operate with it frequently and give it a moral backing which is injurious to our freedom movement. Many of them insist on the continuation of the British military occupation of India, an idea that is wholly repugnant to me. The whole conception of Dominion Status seems to me to be an acceptance of the basic fabric of British imperialism. That conception is therefore unacceptable to me. It is evident that our ideas in regard to imperialism, what it is and what it thrives on, differ fundamentally. It is not surprising therefore that with differing premises we should draw different conclusions.

The Liberals and the Responsivists have in the past repeatedly accepted high office under the British Government—executive councillorships, ministries and the like. Whatever the motive behind it, I have no doubt in my mind that this inevitably results in intimate cooperation with and support of the imperialist system. It means cooperation in the repression of the freedom movement. We have seen that repeatedly in the past. Mr. N.C. Kelkar, if I remember rightly, once congratulated publicly one of his party members on his appointment as an executive councillor.³ If the Congress decides to accept office under the new Act, I am quite sure that to that extent it will cooperate with and strengthen British imperialism. It will also then become partly

3. S.B. Tambe of the Swarajist Party was congratulated by Kelkar on his appointment as an executive councillor in the Central Provinces in 1925.

responsible for any repression or suppression of civil liberties that might ensue.

Repression and the denial of civil liberties have frequently been condemned by the Liberals and the Responsivists. And yet, it has seemed to me that the condemnation has often been of the quantity of it and not the quality. This was natural enough as the official viewpoint as to the necessity of repression was largely accepted. I remember Mr. N.C. Kelkar pressing the government to release members of the Congress Working Committee from prison. The argument advanced was that the situation had improved sufficiently to permit this to be done, and, in any event, if they misbehaved again, they could be sent back to prison. That argument did violence to my way of thinking as it seemed to me a substantial justification of the government's general policy and its previous activities.

Take again the replies I have received from Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru to my circular on civil liberties. I make no grievance of their refusal to join the proposed organisation. Others also had done so without giving the particular reasons they gave. These reasons are important and significant and they go to show, to my thinking, that they accept the British Government's viewpoint in regard to the suppression of civil liberties, although they no doubt think that the government went further than it should have done.

All this seems to me to be the acceptance of the ideology of imperialism and powerful moral support of the policy of repression. Innumerable other activities—political, semi-political, social—at a time when hence repression was going on all over the country, added to this moral support. For persons who felt keenly the distress of the country and the humiliation of the ordinances and the repression, it was hardly fitting to be hobnobbing continually with those who were responsible for this repression, of feasting with them, of giving parties to them. This was not a matter of sympathizing with civil disobedience, but of not sympathizing with the government that was trying to crush the spirit of India. It was a question almost of common decency.

This is the general background of my thought and I should like Mr. Kelkar to understand it, though he might disagree with it utterly. And, if there is any substance in that thought, my conclusions follow from it. It does not help in the clarification of issues, if we call each other perverse or impute evil motives to one another.

I could give many quotations from speeches and writings which support my contention that there is no anti-imperialist outlook among leading members of the Responsivist Party as well as the Liberals. But

this article is long enough already. I shall, however, mention one or two instances.

Mr. M.R. Jayakar (I think it was in an interview in *The Times of India* early in September 1935) appealed to his countrymen to work the new Act in a spirit of compromise, to enter into a pact with the Governor, not to oppose him in any way, and thus prevent the use of the special powers. If this is not an acceptance of the so-called reforms and of the whole imperialist system which stands behind them, I do not know what it is. I could not better the criticism of *The Servant of India* (Sept. 5, 1935) of this declaration of Mr. Jayakar.⁴

Dr. Moonje has in the past frequently appealed for cooperation with the British Government and he was fortunate enough to be congratulated for it by the Calcutta *Statesman*. His military school⁵ received the blessings of the Commander-in-Chief and Lord Willingdon is reported to have expressed the hope that the school would loyally serve the British Empire. Personally I have no desire to serve the British Empire nor have I any sympathy for those who have this passion. But however that might be, no one could call those who wish to serve and strengthen the British Empire as anti-imperialists.

4. The paper rejected Jayakar's advice as to a pact with the Governor and characterized it as "a simple-looking but all-sufficing formula—'Don't let us get in each other's way.'"
5. Moonje established the Bhonsle military school at Poona for "providing preliminary physical and military training to those of our boys who would intend to try to replace these British officers, though its general and comprehensive aim is the military rejuvenation of the Hindus."

6. To Syed Mahmud¹

Mussoorie
17.6.36

My dear Mahmud,

I presume you received my *Autobiography* from my publishers in London. I wonder if you have had time or have cared to read it. You often ask me questions and love to talk at length. But if you want to know a person you can do so more easily through his books. I was sorry when you told me that you had not read, as a whole, my *Glimpses*

1. Syed Mahmud Papers, N.M.M.L.

of *World History*. You could have learnt much about me in it and found much material for thought as well as perhaps answers to some questions which trouble you. But I find that in India there is no habit or desire to read or think. We live superficially, on the surface, or rather in the ruts. It is an astounding country.

I have come here for ten days for a brief spell of quiet. It is not rest as I have plenty of writing and other work to do which keeps me busy. I go down on the 23rd and after that there will be a fierce rush and very interesting work for months.

Ranjit's health has been giving us some anxiety. He has now been told that this altitude does not suit him. So he will also go down soon.

I enclose a letter for Sarwar.

Yours affly.,
Jawahar

7. To the Editor, *The Leader*¹

Mussoorie
22 June 1936

Sir,

I am grateful to your Bombay correspondent for his courtesy in supplying me with a list of my "stupid lies".² Friends and others have often pointed out my many failings but, so far as I can remember, lying had not been included among them. In my vanity I had also thought that I was not particularly stupid, but that, of course, must be a matter of opinion and, being partial on the subject, I am no proper judge of myself. I was thus particularly interested in tracing out, with the help of your correspondent, these additional and regrettable lapses on my part. I regret that your correspondent has failed to convince me or induce me to mend my ways.

You will forgive me, I trust, for writing to you afresh about myself. It is not a subject after my taste. But, being involved in an argument, I cannot very well help dealing with the various statements made by

1. *The Leader*, 27 June 1936.

2. See *ante*, item 1. The correspondent had replied in *The Leader* of 21 June 1936.

your correspondent. I have yet another difficulty. The conviction grows within me that mentally and spiritually, even more so than politically, your correspondent and I move in different worlds, think different thoughts, speak different languages. Inevitably, we fail to understand each other. He has failed to convince or convert me; I shall no doubt meet with an equal measure of failure. Fundamentally it is a question of psychology, and I have endeavoured to deal with this aspect, as well as with others, in certain articles I have recently written, especially the one entitled *An Author Replies*, and in a letter which I have sent to *The Servant of India*. I shall not repeat what I have said there, but I shall only deal with certain incidents and 'facts' to which your correspondent refers.

(1) Repeated reference has been made to certain "awkward" questions that were put to me by Mr. D.V. Gokhale³ and Mr. S.G. Vaze in Poona.⁴ Personally I did not realise then or later that they were awkward. I was told that *The Servant of India* had taken up a strong attitude on the question of civil liberties in the past. I pointed out that being in prison I could not keep in touch with this weekly. It was quite likely that if I had known what *The Servant of India* had been writing, I would have mentioned that a certain section of Liberal opinion held a certain view. But that would not have changed in the slightest my general criticism of the Liberal Party's policy and basic outlook. The strongest of verbal protests do not change a deadening passivity into activity. But even apart from that, I have yet to learn that *The Servant of India* represents the Liberal Party as a whole.

Whether it is right or not for the Liberals to join the Civil Liberties Union it is for them to decide. The politics I have learnt have taught me that in public activities importance should be attached to principles and policies and not to individuals. Perhaps the Liberal variety of politics is of a more personal kind.

It is my conviction that Liberal policy in the past has been fundamentally one of cooperation with British imperialism, even though they may often criticise it and verbally oppose it, and that they have given it moral support in times of crisis. Therefore I think it reactionary and harmful to the country's interests. I believe that Liberals hold that the Congress policy has been injurious to the country's interests. The two viewpoints differ utterly. In spite of strong criticism of the Liberal

3. A Congressman of Poona who later joined the Responsivist Party; editor of *Kesari*, 1931-46.

4. Vaze had argued that it was unwise for Jawaharlal to have invited the Liberals and Responsivists to join the Civil Liberties Union, when in his *Autobiography* he had suspected them to be sympathisers of the government.

policy, I would not dream of calling Liberals liars. But evidently your correspondent's standards and methods of argument are different.

(2) What *The Times of India* reported about me on this occasion I have read for the first time.⁵ It is possible that other newspapers misreported what occurred, I believe, at a private meeting. Even so your correspondent's inferences are remarkable. In Bombay on this occasion, as well as others, I referred to the manifesto of the 21. I mentioned that many of these captains of industry (I did not refer to Liberals in this connection) had violently opposed the national movement (not the civil disobedience movement as such). I gave instances, among them the Mody-Lees pact as well certain well-known happenings in Bombay and the Legislative Assembly.⁶ I added that under cover of attacking socialism, they were really attacking the national movement. The Liberals as such hardly came into the picture, except in so far as some Liberals were among the 21. Far from singling out the Liberals in this matter I hardly referred to them as such.

It is perfectly true that I have often stated that the minimum condition for cooperation on the political plane must be acceptance of independence and an anti-imperialist outlook.⁷ I believe that many Liberal leaders have stated that their minimum condition for cooperation with the Congress is its rejection of independence and civil disobedience. Which of us are liars? Obviously we differ fundamentally. For me the national movement has no meaning except in terms of independence and anti-imperialism. I cannot give up, nor can the Congress, the very foundations on which we stand. But I have stated often enough that we are perfectly prepared to cooperate with other groups on specific issues, and they are many, like civil liberties. Did we not cooperate, even while differing on the larger issue, on the boycott of the Simon Commission?

(3) In not a single speech, public or private, did I describe the manifesto of the 21 as a Liberal manifesto.⁸ (But in justice to your

5. The correspondent had taken exception to Jawaharlal's remark published in *The Times of India* of 23 May 1936 that "some of the Liberals while pretending to oppose socialism attacked the Congress and its policy and principles", and said: "Mr. Nehru is well aware that criticism of socialism has come amply from Congress ranks. Why single out the Liberals alone and talk about their pretending?"

6. See *post*, section 4, item 24.

7. *The Times of India* of 20 May 1936 had reported Jawaharlal as having called for a united front of all the parties who stood for independence and were anti-imperialist but as insisting on their agreement with Congress policy.

8. The correspondent had pointed out that all the signatories to the Bombay manifesto of the 21 were not Liberals.

correspondent I must say that I noticed later a big headline in a Bombay paper to this effect. It seemed silly and I thought it was not worthwhile to contradict it.) It would have been absurd for me to say so, but if I had said so it would not have been uncomplimentary to the Liberal Party for it would have meant that this party had great influence over big business in Bombay.

I have dealt with my *Autobiography* elsewhere and I do not wish to add to this letter, except to say that when I consider the Liberal outlook I refer to something much bigger than the Liberal Party. I include some Congressmen as well as others in it. But primarily that outlook is represented in our politics by the Liberal Party.

Your correspondent writes in anger and uses words which are not usual even in political controversy. To be called a liar is not pleasant. But if it pleases your correspondent to relieve his overcharged feelings in this way, he is welcome to do so. But what is far more important is for us to rise to a higher plane and consider and criticise principles and policies and not individuals. I shall welcome such criticism of what I have written in my *Autobiography* or elsewhere, and it may be that the public also will profit by it.

Jawaharlal Nehru

8. On His Criticisms of the Liberals¹

Question: What are your views on Mr. N.C. Kelkar's rejoinder?²

Jawaharlal Nehru: Though we speak the same language, we mean different things. By those very things, they support imperialism, though it may be considered by them that they are opposing imperialism.

1. Interview to *The Bombay Chronicle*, 3 July 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 4 July 1936.

2. In his rejoinder of 28 June 1936 to Jawaharlal's statement *An Author Replies*, Kelkar repudiated the charges made against the Liberals and criticised Jawaharlal for casting aspersions on him and other Liberals.

I never meant that those people were dishonest. They honestly believe they are doing the right thing. Both parties can be honest and yet criticise each other.

In my reply I pointed out to Mr. Kelkar that we seem to move in different ideological grooves and therefore find it difficult to understand each other. His rejoinder makes this very clear, for he attributes to me statements and accusations, which I have not made in regard to him or his party. In my reply I have occasionally discussed the Liberals and sometimes the Responsivists; very rarely, except at the end, Mr. Kelkar himself.

I am quite sure that Mr. Kelkar and most of his group bitterly dislike and resent British imperialism in India and seek to get rid of it. And yet I would venture to say that the policy they advocate is something that does not vitally weaken the imperialist fabric. This is a matter of opinion and not surely the question of *bona fides* of either party. He has got a little mixed up about what I said about Liberals and Responsivists.

Thus it was about the Liberals that I mentioned that some of them desired the continuance of the British military occupation in India. It is also about the Liberals that I mentioned about the conception of Dominion Status.

Non-participation in the Civil Liberties Union was not made a grievance by me. But the reasons which two or three Liberals gave to this certainly reveals the mentality which seemed to me to be opposed to the very conception of civil liberties. Again, about participation in social functions in life, I was referring to the civil disobedience period and to a number of individuals in various groups and not specially to Mr. Kelkar or his party.

It is my belief that acceptance of office under the present order is a definite cooperation with imperialism. Mr. Kelkar and I differ. There is nothing more that I can say except to suggest that the difference possibly comes in our conception of what imperialism is. Imperialism for me is not the domination of one country by another, but a subtle, complicated, economic, financial and political order, which has gradually evolved in the course of the last few years or so. To define it with exactitude would take half a page. But, briefly, it is usually used to define financial imperialism.

I am afraid I am unable to understand how private congratulations to a person appointed to high office under the British Government can be anything but a boosting up of that office. Therefore this helps the government of the day and I fail to understand entirely what my father's membership of the Skeen Committee has to do with the matter.

Q: How does the present Parliamentary Board differ from the old Swaraj Party?

JN: The difference between the old Swaraj Party and the present Parliamentary Board is that the old Swaraj Party was independent of the Congress though later it became a Congress party.

The present Congress Parliamentary Board works under the supervision of the Working Committee in matters of policy and a certain amount of independence is allowed as far as details are concerned.

Q: Is the draft of the election manifesto ready?

JN: Not only is the draft of the manifesto not ready, but it is not yet drafted. As a matter of fact, the drafting has not yet begun.

Q: What are your impressions about your northern Indian tour?

JN: I reached Lahore on a very peculiar day. It was the first Friday after the Shahidganj case decision³ and there was general expectation of some trouble. I addressed during my stay in the Punjab largely attended meetings and I feel that my speeches and the ideas that I expounded were largely appreciated.

In spite of the enormous interest and excitement, my characterising of the Shahidganj and Communal Award as silly and trivial matters was greatly appreciated. I said that if more stress was laid on economic questions and people were made to think on economic lines, the communal question would gradually weaken.

Q: What transpired between you* and Mahatma Gandhi during your recent visit to Wardha?⁴

JN: During my visits to Maganwadi at Wardha, I discussed with Gandhiji various questions—political and non-political—and questions like the Kamala Nehru Memorial Fund and the like.

Q: How is it that, though the Working Committee sat for two long days, only two or three resolutions about constitutional

3. The decision was given on Monday, 25 May, dismissing the claim of the Muslims to the ownership of the Shahidganj mosque.

4. Jawaharlal was at Wardha from 29 June to 1 July 1936.

changes, condolence resolutions and about Palestine, etc. were released to the press?

JN: The minutes would be pretty long. The Working Committee discussed all manner of things. For example, a very long time was taken up as to whether elections to the A.I.C.C. should take place under the new membership rolls or the old ones.

9. To N. C. Kelkar¹

Allahabad
July 7, 1936

Dear Mr. Kelkar,

As I was passing through Bombay I was asked by some press correspondents if I had seen your rejoinder² to my statement. I had only seen extracts from it at the time and some questions put to me were briefly answered by me then. On my arrival here I read your full article. I have an exceeding distaste for carrying on a controversy which involves personalities. It was with some hesitation that I wrote my last article entitled *An Author Replies*. I have absolutely no desire to add to this controversy which seems to be becoming more and more personal and I have therefore decided not to issue any public statement. I feel convinced that we think along entirely different lines and inevitably draw different conclusions, sometimes from the same facts. Every attempt to convince the other leads to further misapprehension and irritation.

But I must write to you personally for I am greatly distressed to find that I have pained you and made you feel that I have been discourteous to you. I do not suppose my personal assurance to the contrary will carry much weight with you, but nevertheless I owe this to you. I really do not understand why a criticism or a condemnation of a policy or a course of action should be construed as a personal attack on the persons following it. The best of men, morally and intellectually, may follow, in the opinion of others, an utterly wrong and

1. *The Mahratta*, 12 July 1936.

2. In his rejoinder of 28 June, Kelkar objected strongly to Jawaharlal's criticism of his "political ideology as that of a supporter and strengthener of British imperialism in India."

injurious policy. Why are different political groups formed except to combat the ideas and policies of other groups? Nobody has doubted the high character, the absolute integrity, keen intelligence, and superb courage of Mahatma Gandhi. Yet members of your group, as well as others, have not refrained from criticising his policies in the strongest language.³

Most of us who have given thought to political and economic questions and tried to probe behind them have formed certain conclusions, which are of course liable to change. I have likewise come to my conclusions and some account of my mental journey is given in my book. I have formed, in common with many others, a certain conception of modern imperialism and its working, and I am convinced that certain groups and individuals often by their methods and policies strengthen the imperialist structure, howsoever they might wish to get rid of it. It is not a personal matter but one of larger policy, and the merits or demerits of individuals are not involved in it. Nor is it pertinent, for our present argument, to consider who is right or who is wrong.

Your own rejoinder makes it clear to me how greatly we differ in our political outlook and in our conception of what imperialism is. Dr. Moonje's statement,⁴ which you have also given, is something that is utterly beyond my capacity to understand.

My object in writing this letter however is to convey to you my deep personal regret that I should have caused you pain and distress. If I possess a perverted mentality, that is my misfortune. But even that perverse mentality does not think in terms of being discourteous to you.

This letter is a purely personal one, not intended for publication. But if you think that its publication is desirable, certainly you can give it such publicity as you wish.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. In *The Servant of India* of 4 June 1936 Mahatma Gandhi's policy towards the states was characterized as one of urging "just a brown government—whether it be autocratic or plutocratic."

4. Giving his conception of independence and imperialism, Moonje said in his statement published in *The Bombay Chronicle* of 24 June 1936 that he did not want India to break away from the British Empire for which Indians had spent their "blood and money like water."

10. To Charles Trevelyan¹

July 15, 1936

Dear Sir Charles,²

It was a real pleasure to me to receive your brief letter and to find that besides the bond of Harrow we have a closer link.³ Thank you also for your little book that you have sent. I shall read it with pleasure. If I go to England I shall be happy to meet you. But in this world today, and more so in India, one may not plan ahead too far. I have no idea when I may be able to go there. For the moment I am engrossed in my work here. So long as I am free I want to do as much as I can.

With all good wishes,

Yours fraternally,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (1870-1958); member of the Labour cabinets, 1924 and 1929-31.

3. In his letter of 12 June 1936, Trevelyan said that oppression and poverty in India and war and slums taught both Jawaharlal and himself to be the champions of the underdog.

11. To Ernst Toller¹

August 10, 1936

My dear Toller,

It was good to have your letter and to have news of you and your wife. It pleases me to know that you liked my *Autobiography*. It is true, I think, that those who have been in prison and have not finally broken down under the ordeal, develop some kind of a common outlook and a bond which unites them invisibly.² When I read your beautiful *Letters from Prison* again and again they brought pictures of my own moods and thoughts in prison to me and your book occasionally became a mirror of myself.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. After reading the *Autobiography*, Toller wrote that he often thought that the people who had been in prison formed an invisible brotherhood based on suffering and on the great imagination of heart which prison develops.

I am so glad to know that your wife has had a great success acting in your plays. This is excellent news and I only wish I was there to see her.

I am glad you are going to America. The new environment will cheer you up and put fresh energy into you.

I was pleased to find that you agreed with what I had said about the problem in Palestine.³ What I had said of course was very superficial. But it is extraordinary how every problem that we have ultimately gets connected with the larger problem. It cannot be separated. When will this great solution come I wonder and what terrible things will happen before it comes. From day to day I watch with almost painful anguish the development of the trouble in Spain.

I shall write to Indira to find you out. I am sure she would love to meet Mrs. Toller. She is likely to spend the next few months in England.

With all good wishes to you and your wife,

Ever yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. See *post*, section 10, item 5.

12. To O. Urchs¹

3/9

Dear Dr. Urchs,²

I am in receipt of your letter of the 27th August.

It is true that I disagree with the Nazi outlook on life and politics. Unfortunately I do not know much German but I have read a considerable number of books on the subject. I have also read many parts of *My Struggle*³ in English. I realize of course that many Germans of ability have accepted the Nazi outlook and large numbers of them are enthusiastic and keen about it. I appreciate also that this is the outcome of the sufferings of Germany since the War and the unfair treatment accorded to her. But it would serve little purpose for me to discuss in a letter the larger political implications of the Nazi philosophy.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5 (KW)(ii)(Part II)/1936, pp. 499-500, N.M.M.L.

2. A German national temporarily resident in Bombay.

3. Translation of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

I think, however, that you have done me and yourself less than justice by calling a small parenthetical statement a "sneer".⁴ Certainly no sneer was intended though the point of exclamation gives it a slight sarcastic touch. The statement itself is perfectly correct. Even with that point of exclamation all that it hints at is that the Nazis have extended the meaning of "Aryan" beyond reasonable limits. That may be an arguable proposition but it is not a sneer or a slur.

I have valued the cultural connections in the past between Germany and India and I trust they will continue.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. In his *Autobiography* (1936), p. 30, explaining the origin of 'ji' which is added to Indian names as a mark of respect, Jawaharlal wrote: "It is derived from the Sanskrit *Arya* meaning a gentleman or noble-born (not the Nazi meaning of *Aryan*)."

13. To A.C. Fernandes¹

3/9

Dear Sir,²

Your letter of the 25th August reached me only yesterday.

The passage you refer to deals with Gandhiji's tremendous prestige and influence in India and how any slight to him, intentional or unintentional, was felt by us. The reference to his visit to Rome and the refusal by the Pope to grant an interview to him is by way of illustration—to show what reaction this produced in our minds. I have clearly stated that in all probability no affront was meant but whether it was meant or not, it was felt as such by us. I have been told recently that this interview was not given because it was a Sunday, and as a rule interviews are not given on Sundays. I did not know that when I wrote my book, but I do not think that would have made very much difference to my reaction to the news. I should have thought that formalities need not always be observed. There are always special occasions when they can be and are relaxed. It may be perhaps that this Sunday interview rule is supposed to be inflexible.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5(KW)(ii) (Part II)/1936, pp. 503-504, N.M.M.L.

2. Professor of economics and politics, St. Xavier's College, Bombay.

My subsequent statement about the Catholic church not approving of saints and Mahatmas etc., represents my own impression of the general attitude of that church derived from some considerable reading on the subject. That had no direct connection with Gandhiji's visit to Rome. It may of course be a wrong impression and I shall be glad to be corrected. But whether it is right or wrong, I do not see why it should cause resentment. It was not meant to hurt anyone. Personally, although I disagree with that attitude, I rather admire it.

As desired by you I am sending your letter to Gandhiji. But I do not see what further light he can throw on the matter. I presume that all he can say is that he desired an interview but was told that this was not possible that day.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

14. To Gobind Behari Lal¹

Allahabad
September 3, 1936

Dear Mr. Gobind Behari Lal,²

Thank you for your letter of July 20th. It is pleasing to be told that one's book has been welcomed and has influenced in some degree other people.

You are right in what you say about the exile's life.³ There are certain advantages in it. But there are many exiles who do not profit by these advantages owing to adverse circumstances. And then it is almost inevitable that long exile should result in a severance of ties with the homeland.

Dhan Gopal Mukerji's death has been a great shock to me. For the last ten years I knew him intimately.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Science editor of the International News Service; winner of the Pulitzer Prize for 1937.

3. He referred to Jawaharlal's mention of the life of an exile in the *Autobiography* and felt that there were advantages in living in an "advanced, relatively free and self-integrated civilization."

15. To Buona Barnes¹

September 22, 1936

Dear Mrs. Barnes,²

You will forgive me for the delay in acknowledging your letter of the 7th September.³ I have been out of Allahabad and since my return I have had to face a large quantity of work.

I appreciate very much the spirit in which you have written to me and frankness with which you have put your own faith before me. And yet I find it difficult to answer your letter because such things are hardly capable of discussion in letters. We either feel about them or we do not. We believe them or we ignore them. So far as I am concerned I have said enough about myself directly and indirectly in my *Autobiography*. I do not suppose I can usefully add to it. It may be quite possible that I am spiritually empty, though I have never had that sensation. You write of course as an ardent Roman Catholic. I am not wholly ignorant of European history or culture. Quite probably I have read more about it than most educated Europeans. And yet it is quite possible, as you say, that I have not grasped the inner significance of it. If that is so it is my misfortune. I cannot accept the Catholic view of religion or life and, I think, I could point out to you much in history which would lessen the importance of that viewpoint. India has numerous failings and yet essentially it has had the religious outlook on life. So it is not so difficult for an Indian to appreciate the religious outlook in others. You will remember that I have stated somewhere in my *Autobiography* that Catholicism was the only true religion in the West in the narrow sense of the word.

I am myself out of tune with that religious outlook whether it is represented in India or in Rome, and I think that it does not fit in with the modern world. But these are subjects on which argument is not very fruitful and most people proceed on the basis of faith. I can tell you at least that I have made an earnest effort to understand Catholicism

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Wife of J.S. Barnes, a Roman Catholic exponent of fascism and Reuter's correspondent in India.

3. Mrs. Barnes described Jawaharlal's life as "spiritually empty, pointless existence, which does not know the why or wherefore of anything" and claimed that the Catholic church was "the only true church of the only true religion on earth."

and there were several friends who tried to help me in this process. But the understanding that I have got did not produce appreciation.

My letter is rather scrappy. You will forgive me for this.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

16. To A. W. Breolin¹

October 29, 1936

Dear Commander Breolin,²

I must thank you for your letter of the 22nd September. I need hardly say that I was happy to read of the reactions to my book of a person who is not of my way of thinking, and I appreciate very much your good wishes. May the best side win certainly. But I do not personally think of the side as English or Indian. Why should not the good on both sides win and put an end to the horror of interminable conflict which the modern world exhibits?

I do not know the age of your children. If you have a child of about 10 or 12 years of age I should like to send you a little book I wrote for my daughter when she was about 10. There are other books also, also written for my daughter when she was older. But they are big and heavy.

I am not sure if I have spelt your name correctly. But for that you are partly responsible.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. A retired naval officer and Tory businessman.

17. To Martand Upadhyaya¹

Allahabad
October 29, 1936

My dear Martandji,²

Thank you for the copy of *Meri Kahani*³ which I have received. I am glad to learn that your first edition has been exhausted. The general ~~put~~ set up of the book is good, though the reproduction of some of the pictures is not very good. I am sorry I am quite unable to find the time to read through it. I have however looked through it here and there and sometimes found a mistake. I shall point out one such mistake. At page 548 are given figures for languages. You have translated million by lakh thus giving an entirely wrong figure. This must be corrected by changing the figure itself. You might also give the title as is given in the English.

"Basic English" is a technical word which cannot be translated by "मूल संज्ञेजी". Therefore the word "basic" should be used in Hindi also. It has a double meaning—one the obvious meaning and the other—British, American, Scientific, Industrial, Commercial; observe the capitals of all these and you get the word basic....

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1 Sasta Sahitya Mandal Papers (microfilm), N.M.M.L. Extracts.

2 (b. 1908); connected with the Sasta Sahitya Mandal, New Delhi, since 1928 and now its secretary; author of several Hindi books for children.

3 Hindi translation of the *Autobiography*.

18. To A. G. Sayers¹

November 20, 1936

Dear Mr. Sayers,²

Thank you for your letter of the 26th October.³ It is good to have such good wishes and to feel that there are sane people spread out all over this mad world. I try to think of Indian problems as well as world problems apart from the racial issue which unhappily often colours our vision. I wish the time would come when Englishmen and Indians could meet each other normally and consider the problems that affect them without the ingrained prejudices which nearly all of them have. I suppose individuals are rising above these prejudices everywhere but the process is terribly slow and meanwhile we rush towards an abyss.

I am sending this to your club address as I could not quite make out your home address.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.

2. An English supporter of Indian freedom.

3. In his letter of 26 October 1936, Sayers expressed his admiration for Jawaharlal's two books, *Autobiography* and *India and the World*, and said that despite the unfavourable attitude of the capitalist press he was doing his best to spread correct news about India.

THE LUCKNOW CONGRESS



1. Interview to the Associated Press¹

The European situation is so complex that it is useless as well as impossible to express an opinion regarding it within the limits of a short interview. The "haves"—the powers possessing colonies and raw materials—try to retain what they hold, while the powers of the "have-not" group want a share in the spoils. The question cannot be solved merely by a division of raw materials between the colonial powers and the "have-not" powers.

I consider it premature to express an opinion on the Indian political situation.

1. Allahabad, 14 March 1936. From *The Tribune*, 15 March 1936.

2. The Task of Youth¹

I am asked for a message. The hunger for messages and the like in India fills me with wonder. Whence does it come? Why does it continue in spite of a surfeit of pious sentiments repeatedly expressed?

It is natural perhaps to seek commendation for one's work or an exhortation for the future. Some such momentary feeling gives us a measure of present satisfaction and an escape from the oppression of inaction and ineffective living. We begin to delude ourselves into imagining that at any rate we too are doing our bit in the larger scheme of things.

But this is the way of age when the blood runs cold and petrification of mind and body sets in. What of students and young men and women? Are they satisfied with this ineffective substitute for activity? Look at the world around us, pulsating with the fever of change. Study it, understand it, fit into it, and play your part in it—or else collect messages and wax fat on them.

1. Message to the annual issue of the Lucknow university union journal, 15 March 1936. *The Hindustan Times*, 21 March 1936.

3. On the Death of Kamala Nehru¹

My deepest gratitude goes out to those innumerable friends and comrades who have shared my sorrow and sent me messages of sympathy and affection. Such messages have come to me in their thousands from many parts of the world, from foreign friends and Indians living far away from the motherland. They have come to me from every corner of this vast land of ours, from public bodies and organizations. Congress committees, trade and professional associations, workers and peasants and a great host of individuals. A brave and true comrade of ours has left us and I feel lonely and desolate. But the warmth and abundance of the affection of my countrymen have enveloped me and given me strength and courage. Before that love and overflowing goodwill I feel humbled and I bow my head. How can I thank them?

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 17 March 1936. *The Tribune*, 18 March 1936.

4. On the Need for Discipline¹

Brother Volunteers,

I am very glad to meet you today. I have taken a great interest in the volunteer movement and have worked for ten to twelve years in the Hindustani Seva Dal along with Dr. Hardikar. Quite a few from amongst you must have received your training in it. I believe that training of volunteers is very necessary. Today you have come to work at the Congress session. Without training adequate arrangements cannot be made.

I want the work of the Hindustani Seva Dal to be continuous so that trained persons might go back to their cities and villages and give training to others and thus create an organisation in the country. In the

1. Speech at the inauguration of the volunteer training camp, Lucknow, 18 March 1936. From *Aaj*, 21 March 1936. Original in Hindi.

last ten or twelve years the volunteer corps has improved its organisation to a great extent. Yet when compared to other countries the organisation in our country is almost negligible. In no other country is there a necessity to tell the crowds to keep the queue or walk in a line. In our country, even those who call themselves volunteers and participate in processions, keep giving instructions to each other. Our country lacks discipline. During a period of slavery it is bound to happen because the people remain suppressed.

Today our country has acquired new strength. It can be assessed by the fact that much force has been used and is being used against us. As the strength of a nation increases, suppression also continues to increase. You all must be aware of the atrocities committed in the last movement, and even today when there is no movement, the government continues its repression. Organizations like the Hindustani Seva Dal and the Khudai Khidmatgars have been declared unlawful. Severe restrictions have been imposed on the press. From this we can infer the strength of our organisation and the extent of the fear of the government.

Instead of fighting with the enemy we fight among ourselves and the consequences of this will have to be borne by us alone. For a long time I was out of the country. While abroad I could not fully assess the situation. Today I am talking to the members of the Hindustani Seva Dal. Our work cannot stop. As far as our training is concerned, we are facing and will have to face several difficulties. But we will have to continue to do our work. We will have to open at least small, if not big, camps. You should obey your officers. But you should not become blind soldiers and act without thinking because I do not want men of wood. You should give thought to all problems and express your views on the issues before the country.

To think that Mahatma Gandhi is an avatar and he alone will accomplish everything is to do him an injustice. I am happy to see you and at the same time sad to recall the past years. But whether we are happy or sad, work is to be done. Dr. Hardikar wanted to inaugurate the second camp today. But I dropped in suddenly and interfered. Dr. Hardikar is a soldier. He feels shy about inaugurating a camp. But this is his achievement and he alone should inaugurate the camp.

5. To Rabindranath Tagore¹

14-1936

My dear Gurudeva,

Today I read in the *Visva-Bharati News* the English rendering of what you said about Kamala.² I was deeply moved by your extremely generous words and I wish to tell you, if I may, how much strengthened I feel by your blessings and by the thought that you are there to keep us, erring ones, on the straight path.

It was a joy for me to see you at Delhi station. But a railway train is hardly a suitable place for a meeting and I was not satisfied. I hope I shall have a better opportunity before long.

I am so glad you received a substantial sum at Delhi for *Visva-bharati*. I hope you will rest after your present tour.

Not knowing what your exact programme is, I am sending this to Santiniketan.

With love and respects,

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Rabindranath Tagore said on 8 March 1936: "In the case of Kamala... that greatness of hers has spontaneously introduced itself into the hearts of the people... The reticent dignity that she had maintained all through the vicissitudes of her noble life finds today its voice that overwhelms us by its truth."

6. On Proportional Representation¹

Before putting the motion to vote I would like to say a few words with a view to protect the minorities. Though the issue before the House is small, a great principle is involved. Unless a minority is to be forced to revolt, the representation of that minority by means of

1. At the discussion in the subjects committee meeting on the amendment of the Congress constitution, Lucknow, 10 April 1936. From *The Hindustan Times*, 11 April 1936.

proportional representation must be safeguarded. There is, however, no truth in the allegation that the proposed alteration by the Congress executive is aimed at the exclusion of socialists. But if the group concerned took it in that light, then it is up to us to give them no cause for such a feeling. You should remember that the principle of proportional representation has been in the constitution for 15 years. I am a greater socialist than perhaps others, and do not think that anything which the government or the Congress can do will repress the socialists. I suggest that the system of proportional representation be maintained for the reason that the minority feels that such protection is necessary.²

2. Despite Jawaharlal's intervention, the resolution favouring the deletion of proportional representation for the A.I.C.C. election was passed by a narrow majority, 34 voting for and 32 against.

7. On Acceptance of Office¹

It is very unfair of me to take the time of the House in this way, but because a reference has been made to me, I must break my silence. Tomorrow you will have before you my presidential address in the open session, but you will have to decide the question in the subjects committee, and it would be right for me, in spite of this difficulty, to tell the House the point of view I hold in the matter. I occupy a peculiar position. Ordinarily it is not right and proper for members of the Working Committee to say anything against a Working Committee resolution, but that Committee itself is, as you know, a Committee which has practically ended itself, and a new Committee will take its place. Whether the new Committee will be the same as the old is not in question.

The mere fact that I am going to preside tomorrow makes it incumbent on me to say something. The question is not whether there will be an immediate decision or postponement. I find there is a definite difference of outlook. We must exclude personalities in our discussions. It would be below our dignity to accuse each other of unworthy

1. Speech at the subjects committee meeting, Lucknow, 11 April 1936. From *The Hindustan Times*, 12 April 1936.

motives and lack of courage. We must recognize that there are two sides, if not diametrically opposed, at least two definitely opposite sides of opinion that are honestly held. The best thing we can do is to try and convince each other as to the correctness of our viewpoints. Difference on this issue is a vital matter, and we must grasp the vital significance of the two opinions.

There may be some members who may perhaps change their opinion later on. But I am sure those people who are present here in the subjects committee have made up their mind, and even discussion for a week will make no radical change in their viewpoint. This question has been before the country for a long time, and members have come with definite ideas to vote one way or the other. Both the viewpoints will make no difference in regard to the voting, but still I feel uncomfortable if any references are made to me and I am silent, and people think that I think differently than I do.

Coming to the question itself, I feel that the difference is between the two viewpoints, one of the reformist and the other of the revolutionary. If we wish the country to advance towards independence, if we wish the country not to be disillusioned, then we must think many times before we take any steps which increase this reformist mentality. Any idea of acceptance of office tends to reformism. It is absurd to compare with Mr. de Valera.² Those conditions don't exist here. I do feel that those in favour of acceptance of office are honestly supporting their attitude, but it will lead inevitably to reformism.

I also think that a postponement of the issue is preferable to any decision in favour of reformism. Still it has its dangers. It keeps the reformist mentality functioning, the reformist hopes functioning, and those hopes must be dashed to the ground. Are we going to think in terms of a revolution, or are we going to support reformism, and cut up Congress flags and make boys and girls in schools sing our songs? Is this going to bring independence to this country? A postponement of the question means hesitancy and indecision, and we will have to decide this question as we think best.

But afterwards we shall have to face another question, and that is how the Congress will pull on together. If we have to face enormously powerful enemies, we cannot allow ourselves to split up and waste our energies in conflicts. So far as I am concerned I will try to pull together, even if the decision of the Congress is such as it may be.

2. Advocating acceptance of office, Satyamurti had cited the example of de Valera who fought the Irish constitution by taking office and then removed the oath of allegiance to the King.

We ought to try and approach this question with a certain mentality — that mentality is that we cannot afford to split up, and break up the Congress. We may even differ now, to agree later and work together. Occasionally we may even act in different ways, but I will certainly do my utmost to try to function so as to help the growth of that mentality and common action in the Congress.

8. The Meaning of Independence¹

Such an interpretation of the Lahore resolution is wrong, inconsistent and futile. I understand the resolution to mean severance of the British connection and I have made it clear in my speeches that this is the only meaning. I will continue to hold such a view and all other interpretations will not be correct. But it will be undignified if it is sought to pass the resolution to give an interpretation of the previous Congress resolution.

1. Lucknow, 12 April 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 13 April 1936. This was in reply to the decision of the socialists that they wished to introduce a resolution regarding "complete independence" as it had been interpreted by some leaders as meaning only "substance of independence".

9. Hoisting of the National Flag¹

This flag is the symbol of our independence, our ideals, our aspirations and our suffering. After seeing it unfurled and standing under it, we have sung the flag song, pledged to serve it and save its honour and glory at all costs.

Let it fly aloft. Let its honour shoot higher. Do not let it fall and don't be traitors to your country and its symbol.

1. Lucknow, 12 April 1936. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 13 April 1936.

10. The Presidential Address¹

Comrades,

After many years I face you again from this tribune—many weary years of strife and turmoil and common suffering. It is good for us to meet again; it is good for me to see this great host of old comrades and friends, linked together by strong bonds that cannot break, to sense the old brave spirit yet again, to feel your overwhelming kindness and goodwill to one whose greatest privilege it is to have been a comrade and a soldier with all of you in a mighty struggle for freedom. I am heartened and strengthened by you, though even in this great gathering I feel a little lonely. Many a dear comrade and friend has left us, worn out, long before the normal length of our earthly days, by the stress and strain of conflict. One by one they go, leaving a void in our hearts and a dull misery in our minds. They find peace from this turmoil perhaps, and it is well, for they deserved it. They rest after their labours.

But what of us who remain behind with a heavier burden to carry? There is no rest for us or for those who languish in prison or in detention camp. We cannot rest, for rest is betrayal of those who have gone and in going handed the torch of freedom to us to keep alight; it is betrayal of the cause we have espoused and the pledge we have taken; it is betrayal of the millions who never rest.

I am weary and I have come back like a tired child yearning for solace in the bosom of our common mother, India. That solace has come to me in overflowing measure; thousands of hands have been stretched out to me in love and sympathy; millions of silent voices have carried their message of affection to my heart. How can I thank you, men and women of India? How can I express in words feelings that are too deep for utterance?

For many years now I have been a distant looker-on on this Indian scene where once I was an actor, and many a thing has happened that has filled me with distress and anguish. I do not wish to survey this recent past of ours, which must be fresh in your memory, and which has left a sorry trail behind and many knots which are difficult to unravel. But we may not ignore it for out of that past as well as the present, we have to build our future. We have followed high ideals

1. Lucknow, 12 April 1936. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 13 April 1936. Reprinted in *India and the World*, (London, 1936), pp. 64-107.

and we have taken pride in the fact that our means are worthy of those ideals. We have been witnesses of many a miracle in this old and battered land of ours, and yet our very success has been followed by failure and disillusion. Temporary failure has little significance when the aim is high and the struggle bound to be a long one; it is but the incentive to further effort. Often it teaches us more than a victory easily won and becomes a prelude to a greater success. But we profit by it only if we learn its lesson and search our minds for an explanation of that failure. Only by constant self-questioning, individual and national, can we keep on the right path. An easy and unthinking confidence is almost as bad as a weak submission to helpless dejection. Real failure comes only when we forget our ideals and objectives and principles and begin to wander away from the road which leads to their realization.

In this crisis of our history, therefore, let us look into ourselves and examine, without pity or prejudice, what we have done and what others have done to us, and seek to find out where we stand today. We dare not delude ourselves or evade real issues for fear of offending others, even though some of these others are comrades whom we respect. That is the way of self-deception which none who seek great and vital changes can follow except at their peril.

Sixteen years ago, under the inspiration of our leader, we took a new and long step converting this Congress from an ineffective body, feebly functioning amongst the upper classes, into a powerful democratic organization with its roots in the Indian soil and the vast masses who live on it. A handful of our old friends, representing an age and a class which had had its day, left us, fearful of this democratic upsurge and preferring the shelter and protection of British imperialism to joining hands with the new vital forces which convulsed the country and struggled for freedom. Historically they lapsed into the past. But we heard the rumbling of those forces and, for the moment, lined up with them and played a not unworthy part in current history. We sensed the new spirit of mass release, of psychological escape from the cramping effects of long subjection; we gloried in the breaking of the mental bonds that encompassed us. And because our minds became free we felt that political freedom could not be far, for it is often harder to break the bonds of the spirit than physical bonds and chains of iron and steel. We represented the spirit of the age and were marching step by step with countless others in our country and outside. The exhilaration of being in tune with the masses and with world forces came upon us, and the feeling that we were the agents of historic destiny.

We were engrossed in our national struggle, and the turn it took bore the powerful impress of our great leader and of our national genius. We were hardly conscious then of what was happening outside. And yet our struggle was but part of a far wider struggle for freedom, and the forces that moved us were moving millions of people all over the world and driving them into action. All Asia was astir from the Mediterranean to the Far East, from the Islamic West to the Buddhist East; Africa responded to the new spirit; Europe, broken up by the war, was struggling to find a new equilibrium. And right across a vast area in Europe and Asia, in the Soviet territories, a new conception of human freedom and social equality fought desperately against a host of enemies. There were great differences in the many aspects of this freedom struggle all over the world and we were misled by them and did not see the common background. Yet if we are to understand these varied phenomena, and derive a lesson from them for our own national struggle, we must try to see and understand the whole picture. And if we do so we cannot fail to observe an organic connection between them which endures through changing situations. If once we grasp this organic bond, the world situation becomes easier to understand and our own national problems take their proper places in the wider picture. We realise then that we cannot isolate India or the Indian problem from that of the rest of the world. To do so is to ignore the real forces that are shaping events and to cut ourselves adrift from the vital energy that flows from them. To do so, again, is to fail to understand the significance of our own problems, and if we do not understand this how can we solve them? We are apt to lose ourselves, as we have indeed done, in petty conflicts and minor questions, like the communal problem, and forget the major issues; we are apt to waste our energy (like our moderate friends do) in interminable discussions over legal quibbles and constitutional questions.

During the troubled aftermath of the Great War came revolutionary changes in Europe and Asia, and the intensification of the struggle for social freedom in Europe and a new aggressive nationalism in the countries of Asia. There were ups and downs, and sometimes it appeared as if the revolutionary urge had exhausted itself and things were settling down. But economic and political conditions were such that there could be no settling down, the existing structure could no longer cope with these new conditions, and all its efforts to do so were vain and fruitless. Everywhere conflicts grew, and a great depression overwhelmed the world and there was a progressive deterioration everywhere except in the wide-flung Soviet territories of the U.S.S.R., where, in marked contrast with the rest of the world, astonishing

progress was made in every direction. Two rival economic and political systems faced each other in the world and, though they tolerated each other for a while, there was an inherent antagonism between them, and they played for mastery on the stage of the world. One of them was the capitalist order which had inevitably developed into vast imperialisms, which, having swallowed the colonial world, were intent on eating each other up. Powerful still and fearful of war, which might endanger their possessions, yet they came into inevitable conflict with each other and prepared feverishly for war. They were quite unable to solve the problems that threatened them and helplessly they submitted to slow decay. The other was the socialist order of the U.S.S.R. which went from progress to progress, though often at terrible cost, and where the problems of the capitalist world had ceased to exist.

Capitalism, in its difficulties, took to fascism with all its brutal suppression of what Western civilization had apparently stood for; it became, even in some of its homelands, what its imperialist counterpart had long been in the subject colonial countries. Fascism and imperialism thus stood out as the two faces of the now decaying capitalism, and though they varied in different countries according to national characteristics and economic and political conditions, they represented the same forces of reaction and supported each other, and at the same time came into conflict with each other, for such conflict was inherent in their very nature. Socialism in the West and the rising nationalism of the Eastern and other dependent countries opposed this combination of fascism and imperialism. Nationalism in the East, it must be remembered, was essentially different from the new and terribly narrow nationalism of fascist countries; the former was the historical urge to freedom, the latter the last refuge of reaction.

Thus we see the world divided up into two vast groups today—the imperialist and fascist on one side, the socialist and nationalist on the other. There is some overlapping of the two and the line between them is difficult to draw, for there is mutual conflict between the fascist and imperialist powers, and the nationalism of subject countries has sometimes a tendency to fascism. But the main division holds, and if we keep it in mind, it will be easier for us to understand world conditions and our own place in them.

Where do we stand, then, we who labour for a free India? Inevitably we take our stand with the progressive forces of the world which are ranged against fascism and imperialism. We have to deal with one imperialism in particular, the oldest and the most far-reaching of the modern world, but powerful as it is, it is but one aspect of world imperialism. And that is the final argument for Indian independence

and for the severance of our connection with the British Empire. Between Indian nationalism, Indian freedom, and British imperialism there can be no common ground, and if we remain within the imperialist fold, whatever our name or status, whatever outward semblance of political power we might have, we remain cribbed and confined and allied to and dominated by the reactionary forces and the great financial vested interests of the capitalist world. The exploitation of our masses will still continue and all the vital social problems that face us will remain unsolved. Even real political freedom will be out of our reach, much more so radical social changes.

With the development of this great struggle all over the world we have seen the progressive deterioration of many of the capitalist-imperialist countries and an attempt at consolidation of the reactionary forces under fascism or nazism or so-called "national" governments. In India the same process has been evident to us during these past years, and the stronger the nationalist movement has grown, the more have efforts been made by our imperialist rulers to break our ranks and to gather together under their banner the reactionary elements in the country. The Round Table Conferences were such attempts and, though they helped our rulers in some measure, they served a useful purpose by showing us clearly the division between the imperialist and the anti-imperialist forces in the country. Unhappily we did not fully profit by this lesson and we still imagine that we can win over some of these imperialist groups to the side of Indian freedom and anti-imperialism, and in a vain attempt to do so we suppress our ideals, blush for our objectives and tone down our activities.

Meanwhile the decay of British imperialism in India becomes ever more apparent. It cannot, by its very nature, solve our economic problems and rid us of our terrible poverty, which it has largely itself created. It subsists on a normal fare of the fiercest repression and a denial of civil and even personal liberty. It surrounds us with a wide network of spies and, among the pillars of its administration, is the tribe of informers and *agents provocateurs* and the like. Its services try to seek comfort for their obvious deterioration and incompetence by perpetually singing songs of mutual adulation. Argument gives place to the policeman's baton and the soldier's bayonet and prison and detention camp, and even our extraordinary finances are justified by the methods of the bully. It is astonishing to find to what depths of vulgarity our rulers have descended in their ardent desire to hold on to what they have got, and it is depressing, though perhaps inevitable, that some of our countrymen, more interested in British imperialism than the British themselves, should excel at this deplorable

game. So wanting in mental equilibrium are they, so obsessed by fear of the Congress and the national movement it represents, that their wishes become thoughts, their thoughts inferences and their inferences facts, solemnly stated in official publications, and on which the majesty of the British Government rests in India, and people are kept in prison and detention camps without charge or trial. Being interested in psychology, I have watched this process of moral and intellectual decay and realised, even more than I did previously, how autocratic power corrupts and degrades and vulgarizes. I have read sometimes the reports of the recent Assembly meetings and noted the great differences in tone and content between them and the Assembly of ten years ago. I have observed the forced attempts made to discredit the Congress by a reference to the Tilak Swaraj Fund with which I was connected for many years as Secretary of the Congress. But prepared as I was for much, even I was surprised at the insinuations made against our much-loved chief, Rajendra Babu, and the charges brought against the Bihar Relief Fund.² A mild criticism by me of official incompetence soon after the Bihar earthquake³ was deeply resented probably because the truth of it was realised. Newspapers that criticised the official arrangements at a subsequent earthquake were heavily penalized or suppressed. All criticism hurts the sensitive skin of the government, and its reactions are quick and far-reaching. The more incompetent it grows the less it likes being told so. But this does not prevent it from indulging in reckless allegations about others.

This psychological aspect interests me even more than the more aggressive manifestations of British authority in India, for it throws light on much that has happened. It shows us how a clear and definite fascist mentality has developed among our rulers and how closely allied is imperialism to fascism. How this fascist mentality has functioned in the recent past and is functioning today, I shall not go into now. You know well the horror of these years and of the nightmare that we have all experienced. We shall not easily forget it and if there are some who have been cowed down by it, there are others who have steeled themselves to a greater resolve to end this infamy in India.

But of one thing I must say a few words, for to me it is one of the most vital things that I value. That is the tremendous deprivation of civil liberties in India. A government that has to rely on the Criminal

2. In the Legislative Assembly on 9 March 1936, it was alleged that the Congress did not present accounts fully and administer its finances properly. References were made to the Tilak Swaraj Fund and the Bihar Relief Fund.

3. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 196-198.

Law Amendment Act and similar laws, that suppresses the press and literature, that bans hundreds of organizations, that keeps people in prison without trial, and that does so many other things that are happening in India today, is a government that has ceased to have even a shadow of a justification for its existence. I can never adjust myself to these conditions; I find them intolerable. And yet I find many of my own countrymen complacent about them, some even supporting them, some, who have made the practice of sitting on a fence into a fine art, being neutral when such questions are discussed. And I have wondered what there was in common between them and me and those who think as I do. We in the Congress welcome all cooperation in the struggle for Indian freedom; our doors are ever open to all who stand for that freedom and are against imperialism. But they are not open to the allies of imperialism and the supporters of repression and those who stand by the British Government in its suppression of civil liberty. We belong to opposite camps.

Recently, as you know, we have had a typical example of the way government functions in India in the warning issued to a dear and valued comrade of ours, Subhas Chandra Bose. We who know him also know how frivolous are the charges brought against him. But even if there was substance in them we could not tolerate willingly the treatment to which he has long been subjected. He did me the honour to ask me for advice and I was puzzled and perplexed, for it is no easy thing to advise another in such a matter, when such advice might mean prison. Subhas Bose has suffered enough at the cost of his health. Was I justified in adding to this mental and physical agony? I hesitated and at first suggested to him to postpone his departure. But this advice made me unhappy, and I consulted other friends and then advised him differently.⁴ I suggested that he should return to his homeland as soon as he could. But, it appears, that even before my advice reached him, he had started on his journey back to India.

This instance leads us to think of the larger problem, of the way the bogey of terrorism has been exploited by the government to crush political activity and to cripple physically and mentally the fair province of Bengal. You know that terrorism as such is practically non-existent now in Bengal or any part of India. Terrorism is always a sign of political immaturity in a people, just as so-called constitutionalism, where there is no democratic constitution, is a sign of political senility.

4. The government had arrested Bose on 8 April as being "a menace to the peace and tranquillity of the country." For Jawaharlal's correspondence with Bose see *post*, section 6, items 1 and 3.



ARRIVAL AT KARACHI AIRPORT, MARCH 1936

Grand Pharan
Allahabad
April 1. 1935

My dear Gurnatara,

Today I read in the 'Visva Bharati News' the English rendering of what you said about Kamala. I was deeply moved by your extremely generous words and I wish to tell you, if I may, how much strengthened I feel by your blessings and by the thought that you are there to keep us, every one, on the straight path.

It was a joy for me to see you at Delhi station. But a railway train is hardly a suitable place for a meeting and I was not satisfied. I hope I shall have a better opportunity before long.

I am so glad you received a substantial sum at Delhi for Visva Bharati. I hope you will rest after your present tour.

Not knowing what your exact programme is, I am sending this to Santiniketan.

With love and respects,

Yours affectionately

Jawaharlal

Our national movement has long outgrown that immature stage, and even the odd individuals who have in the past indulged in terrorist acts have apparently given up that tragic and futile philosophy. The Congress, by its stress on peaceful and effective action, has drawn the youth of the country into its fold and all traces of terroristic activity would long have vanished but for the policy of the government which feeds the roots out of which a helpless violence grows. But terrorism or no terrorism, a government which adopts the methods which have long prevailed in Midnapur and elsewhere in Bengal stands self-condemned. Similar methods have also long prevailed in the Frontier Province, although there is no hint of terroristic activity there, and that fine man and true beloved of millions, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, still lies in prison. Excuses differ, but the real reason is the ever-growing fascist mentality of our rulers.

That is one side of the picture. What of us? I have found a spirit of disunion spreading over the land, a strange malaise, and petty conflicts amongst old comrades growing ever bigger and interfering with all activity. We have forgotten for the moment the larger ideals we stood for and we quarrel over petty issues. We have largely lost touch with the masses and, deprived of the life-giving energy that flows from them, we dry up and weaken and our organization shrinks and loses the power it had. First things must always come first, and because we have forgotten this and argue and dispute over secondary matters, we are in danger of losing our bearings.

Every great struggle has its ups and downs and temporary failures. When such a setback occurs there is a reaction when the fund of national energy is exhausted and has to be re-charged. That happens again and again, and yet that is not an adequate explanation of all that has taken place. Our direct action struggles in the past were based on the masses, and especially the peasantry, but the backbone and leadership were always supplied by the middle classes, and this, under the circumstances, was inevitable. The middle classes are a vague group or groups; at the top, a handful of them are closely allied to British imperialism; at the bottom are the dispossessed and other groups who have been progressively crushed by economic circumstances and out of whose ranks come the advanced political workers and revolutionaries; in between are the centre groups, which tend often to side with the advanced elements, but which also have alliances with the upper groups and live in the hope of joining their superior ranks. A middle class leadership is thus often a distracted leadership, looking in two directions at the same time. In times of crisis and struggle, when unity of aim and activity is essential, this two-faced leadership is bound to injure the cause and to hold back

when a forward move is called for. Being too much tied up with property and the goods of this world, it is fearful of losing them, and it is easier to bring pressure on it and to exhaust its stamina. And yet, paradoxically, it is only from the middle class intellectuals that revolutionary leadership comes, and we in India know that our bravest leaders and our stoutest comrades have come from the ranks of the middle classes. But by the very nature of our struggle, these front rank leaders are taken away and the others who take their place tire and are influenced more by the static element of their class. That has been very evident during our recent struggle when our propertied classes were hit hard by the government's drastic policy of seizure and confiscation of monies and properties, and were thus induced to bring pressure for the suspension of the struggle.

How is this problem to be solved then? Inevitably, we must have middle class leadership but this must look more and more towards the masses and draw strength and inspiration from them. The Congress must be not only *for* the masses, as it claims to be, but *of* the masses; only then will it really be for the masses. I have a feeling that our relative weakness today is due to a certain decay of our middle class elements and our divorce from the people at large. Our policies and ideas are governed far more by this middle class outlook than by a consideration of the needs of the great majority of the population. Even the problems that trouble us are essentially middle class problems, like the communal problem, which have no significance for the masses.

This is partly due, I think, to a certain historical growth during the last fifteen years to which we have failed to adapt ourselves, to a growing urgency of economic problems affecting the masses, and to a rising mass consciousness which does not find sufficient outlet through the Congress. This was not so in 1920 and later, when there was an organic link between the Congress and the masses, and their needs and desires, vague as they were, found expression in the Congress. But as those needs and desires have taken more definite shape, they have not been so welcome to other elements in the Congress and that organic connection has gone. That, though regrettable, is really a sign of growth and, instead of lamenting it, we must find a new link and a new connection on a fresh basis which allows for growth of mass consciousness within the Congress. The middle class claim to represent the masses had some justification in 1920; it has much less today, though the lower middle classes have still a great deal in common with the masses.

Partly also our divorce from the people at large is due to a certain narrowness of our Congress constitution. The radical changes made in it fifteen years ago brought it in line with existing conditions then, and

It drew in large numbers and became an effective instrument of national activity. Though the control and background were essentially middle class and city, it reached the remotest village and brought with it political and economic consciousness to the masses, and there was widespread discussion of national issues in city and village alike. One could feel the new life pulsating through this vast land of ours and, as we were in harmony with it, we drew strength from it. The intense repression by the government during later years broke many of our physical and outward bonds with our countryside. But something more than that happened. The vague appeal of earlier days no longer sufficed and on the new economic issues that were forcing themselves on us, we hesitated to give a definite opinion. Worse even than the physical divorce, there was a mental divorce between the middle class elements and the mass elements. Our constitution no longer fitted in with changing conditions; it lost its roots in the soil and became a matter of small committees functioning in the air. It still had the mighty prestige of the Congress name behind it and this carried it a long way, but it had lost the living democratic touch. It became a prey to authoritarianism and a battleground for rival cliques fighting for control, and, in doing so, stooping to the lowest and most objectionable of tactics. Idealism disappeared, and in its place there came opportunism and corruption. The constitutional structure of the Congress was unequal to facing the new situation; it could be shaken up anywhere almost by a handful of unscrupulous individuals. Only a broad democratic basis could have saved it, and this was lacking.

Last year an attempt was made to revise the constitution in order to get rid of some of these evils.⁵ How far that attempt has succeeded or not I am not competent to judge. Perhaps it has made the organization more efficient, but efficiency means little if it has no strength behind it, and strength, for us, can only come from the masses. The present constitution stresses still further the authoritarian side of the organization, and in spite of stressing rural representation does not provide effective links with the masses.

The real problem for us is, how in our struggle for independence we can join together all the anti-imperialist forces in the country, how we can make a broad front of our mass elements with the great majority of the middle classes which stands for independence. There has been some talk of a joint front but, so far as I can gather, this refers to some alliance among the upper classes, probably at the expense of the masses.

5. Members of communal organizations were prohibited from joining the Congress and a greater proportion was reserved for rural representation.

That surely can never be the idea of the Congress, and if it favours it, it betrays the interests it has claimed to represent, and loses the very reason for its existence. The essence of a joint popular front must be uncompromising opposition to imperialism, and the strength of it must inevitably come from the active participation of the peasantry and workers.

Perhaps you have wondered at the way I have dealt at some length with the background of international and national affairs and not touched so far the immediate problems that fill your minds. You may have grown impatient. But I am convinced that the only right way of looking at our own problems is to see them in their proper place in a world-setting. I am convinced that there is intimate connection between world events, and our national problem is but a part of the world problem of capitalist imperialism. To look at each event apart from the others and without understanding the connection between them must lead to the formation of erratic and erroneous views. Look at the vast panorama of world change today, where mighty forces are at grips with each other and dreadful war darkens the horizon: subject peoples struggling for freedom and imperialism crushing them down; exploited classes facing their exploiters and seeking freedom and equality; Italian imperialism bombing and killing the brave Ethiopians; Japanese imperialism continuing its aggression in north China and Mongolia; British imperialism piously objecting to other countries misbehaving, yet carrying on in much the same way in India and the Frontier; and behind it all a decaying economic order which intensifies all these conflicts. Can we not see an organic connection in all these various phenomena? Let us try to develop the historic sense so that we can view current events in proper perspective and understand their real significance. Only then can we appreciate the march of history and keep step with it.

I realise that in this address I am going a little beyond the usual beat of the Congress President. But I do not want you to have me under any false pretences and we must have perfect frankness with each other. Most of you must know my views on social and economic matters for I have often given expression to them. Yet you chose me as President. I do not take that choice to mean an endorsement by you all, or by a majority, of those views, but I take it that this does mean that those views are spreading in India and that most of you will be so indulgent as at least to consider them.

I am convinced that the only key to the solution of the world's problem and of India's problems lies in socialism, and when I use this word I do so not in a vague humanitarian way but in the scientific, economic sense. Socialism is, however, something even more than an economic doctrine; it is a philosophy of life and as such also it appeals

to me. I see no way of ending the poverty, the vast unemployment, the degradation and the subjection of the Indian people except through socialism. That involves vast and revolutionary changes in our political and social structure, the ending of vested interests in land and industry, as well as the feudal and autocratic Indian states system. That means the ending of private property, except in a restricted sense, and the replacement of the present profit system by a higher ideal of cooperative service. It means ultimately a change in our instincts and habits and desires. In short, it means a new civilization, radically different from the present capitalist order. Some glimpse we can have of this new civilization in the territories of the U.S.S.R. Much has happened there which has pained me greatly and with which I disagree, but I look upon that great and fascinating unfolding of a new order and a new civilization as the most promising feature of our dismal age. If the future is full of hope it is largely because of Soviet Russia and what it has done, and I am convinced that, if some world catastrophe does not intervene, this new civilization will spread to other lands and put an end to the wars and conflicts which capitalism feeds.

I do not know how or when this new order will come to India. I imagine that every country will fashion it after its own way and fit it in with its national genius. But the essential basis of that order must remain and be a link in the world order that will emerge out of the present chaos.

Socialism is thus for me not merely an economic doctrine which I favour; it is a vital creed which I hold with all my head and heart. I work for Indian independence because the nationalist in me cannot tolerate alien domination; I work for it even more because for me it is the inevitable step to social and economic change. I should like the Congress to become a socialist organisation and to join hands with the other forces in the world which are working for the new civilization. But I realise that the majority in the Congress, as it is constituted today, may not be prepared to go thus far. We are a nationalist organization and we think and work on the nationalist plane. It is evident enough now that this is too narrow even for the limited objective of political independence, and so we talk of the masses and their economic needs. But still most of us hesitate, because of our nationalist background, to take a step which might frighten away some vested interests. Most of those interests are already ranged against us and we can expect little from them except opposition even in the political struggle.

Much as I wish for the advancement of socialism in this country, I have no desire to force the issue in the Congress and thereby create difficulties in the way of our struggle for independence. I shall cooperate

gladly and with all the strength in me with all those who work for independence even though they do not agree with the socialist solution. But I shall do so stating my position frankly and hoping in course of time to convert the Congress and the country to it, for only thus can I see it achieving independence. It should surely be possible for all of us who believe in independence to join our ranks together even though we might differ on the social issue. The Congress has been in the past a broad front representing various opinions joined together by that common bond. It must continue as such even though the difference of those opinions becomes more marked.

How does socialism fit in with the present ideology of the Congress? I do not think it does. I believe in the rapid industrialization of the country and only thus, I think, will the standards of the people rise substantially and poverty be combated. Yet I have cooperated wholeheartedly in the past with the khadi programme and I hope to do so in the future because I believe that khadi and village industries have a definite place in our present economy. They have a social, a political, and an economic value which is difficult to measure but which is apparent enough to those who have studied their effects. But I look upon them more as temporary expedients of a transition stage rather than as solutions of our vital problems. That transition stage might be a long one, and in a country like India, village industries might well play an important, though subsidiary, role even after the development of industrialism. But though I cooperate in the village industries programme my ideological approach to it differs considerably from that of many others in the Congress who are opposed to industrialization and socialism.

The problem of untouchability and the Harijans again can be approached in different ways. For a socialist it presents no difficulty, for under socialism there can be no such differentiation or victimization. Economically speaking, the Harijans have constituted the landless proletariat, and an economic solution removes the social barriers that custom and tradition have raised.

I come now to a question which is probably occupying your minds—the new Act passed by the British Parliament and our policy in regard to it. This Act has come into being since the last Congress met, but even at that time we had had a foretaste of it in the shape of the White Paper, and I know of no abler analysis of those provisions than that contained in the presidential address of my predecessor in this high office.⁶ The Congress rejected that proposed constitution, and resolved

6. Rajendra Prasad had, at Bombay on 26 October 1934, analysed the White Paper proposals in detail.

to have nothing to do with it. The new Act, as is well known, is an even more retrograde measure, and has been condemned by even the most moderate and cautious of our politicians. If we rejected the White Paper, what then are we to do with this new charter of slavery to strengthen the bonds of imperialist domination and to intensify the exploitation of our masses? And even if we forget its content for a while, can we forget the insult and injury that have accompanied it, the contemptuous defiance of our wishes, the suppression of civil liberties, and the widespread repression that has been our normal lot? If they had offered to us the crown of heaven with this accompaniment and with dishonour, would we not have spurned it as inconsistent with our national honour and self-respect? What, then, of this?

A charter of slavery is no law for the slave, and though we may perforce submit for a while to it and to the humiliation of ordinances and the like, inherent in that enforced submission is the right and desire to rebel against it and to end it.

Our lawyers have examined this new constitution and have condemned it. But constitutions are something much more than legal documents. "The real constitution", said Ferdinand Lassalle,⁷ consists of "the actual relationships of power", and the working of this power we see even today, after the Act has been passed. That is the constitution we have to face, not the fine phrases which are sometimes presented to us, and we can only deal with it with the strength and power generated by the people of the country.

To this Act our attitude can only be one of uncompromising hostility and a constant endeavour to end it. How can we do this?

Since my return from Europe I have had the advantage of full and frank discussion with my colleagues of the Working Committee. All of us have agreed that the Act has to be rejected and combated, but all of us have not been able to agree to the manner of doing so. We have pulled together in the past and I earnestly hope that we shall do so in the future, but in order to do so effectively we must recognise that there are marked differences in our outlooks. I do not yet know, as I write, what the final recommendation of the Working Committee will be on this issue. I can only, therefore, venture to put before you my own personal views on the subject, not knowing how far they represent the views of Congressmen. I should like to make it clear, however, in fairness to my old colleagues of the Working Committee, that the majority of them do not agree with all the views I am going to express. But

⁷ (1825-1864); founder of the German Social Democratic Party and leader of the labour movement.

whether we agree or disagree, or whether we agree to differ, there is a strong desire on our part to continue to cooperate together, laying stress on our many points of agreement rather than on the differences. That is the right course for us and, as a democratic organization, that is the only course open to us.

I think that, under the circumstances, we have no choice but to contest the elections to the new provincial legislatures in the event of their taking place. We should seek election on the basis of a detailed political and economic programme, with our demand for a constituent assembly in the forefront. I am convinced that the only solution of our political and communal problems will come through such an assembly, provided it is elected on an adult franchise and a mass basis. That assembly will not come into existence till at least a semi-revolutionary situation has been created in this country and the actual relationships of power, apart from paper constitutions, are such that the people of India can make their will felt. When that will happen I cannot say, but the world is too much in the grip of dynamic forces today to admit of static conditions in India or elsewhere for long. We may thus have to face this issue sooner than we might expect. But obviously a constituent assembly will not come through the new Act or the new legislatures. Yet we must press this demand and keep it before our country and the world, so that when the time comes we may be ripe for it.

A constituent assembly is the only proper and democratic method for the framing of our constitution, and for its delegates then to negotiate a treaty with the representatives of the British Government. But we cannot go to it with blank minds in the hope that something good will emerge out of it. Such an assembly, in order to be fruitful, must have previous thought behind it and a definite scheme put forward by an organised group. The actual details, as to how the assembly is to be convened, must depend on the circumstances then existing and need not trouble us now. But it will be our function as the Congress, to know exactly what we are after, to place this clearly and definitely before the assembly, and to press for its acceptance.

One of the principal reasons for our seeking election will be to carry the message of the Congress to the millions of voters and to the scores of millions of the disfranchised, to acquaint them with our future programme and policy, to make the masses realise that we not only stand for them but that we are of them and seek to cooperate with them in removing their social and economic burdens. Our appeal and message will not be limited to the voters, for we must remember that hundreds of millions are disfranchised and they need our help most, for they are

at the bottom of the social ladder and suffer most from exploitation. We have seen in the past widespread official interference in the elections; we shall have to face that, as well as the serried and monied ranks of the reactionaries. But the real danger will come from our toning down our programme and policy in order to win over the hesitating and compromising groups and individuals. If we compromise on principles, we shall fall between two stools and deserve our fall. The only right way and the only safe way is to stand four-square on our own programme and to compromise with no one who has opposed the national struggle for freedom in the past, or who is in any way giving support to British imperialism.

When we have survived the election, what then are we to do? Office or no office? A secondary matter, perhaps, and yet behind that issue lie deep questions of principle and vital differences of outlook, and a decision on that, either way, has far-reaching consequences. Behind it lies, somewhat hidden, the question of independence itself and whether we seek revolutionary changes in India or are working for petty reforms under the aegis of British imperialism. We go back again in thought to the clash of ideas which preceded the changes in the Congress in 1920. We made a choice then deliberately and with determination, and discarded the old sterile creed of reformism. Are we to go back again to that blind and suffocating lane, after all these years of brave endeavour, and to wipe out the memory of what we have done and achieved and suffered? That is the issue and let none of us forget it when we have to give our decision. In this India, crying aloud for radical and fundamental change, in this world pregnant with revolutionary and dynamic possibility, are we to forget our mission and our historic destiny, and slide back to static futility? And if some of us feel tired and hunger for rest and quiet, do we imagine that India's masses will follow our lead, when elemental forces and economic necessity are driving them to their inevitable goal? If we enter the backwaters, others will take our place on the bosom of the flowing stream and will dare to take the rapids and ride the torrent.

How has this question arisen? If we express our hostility to the Act and reject the entire scheme, does it not follow logically that we should have nothing to do with the working of it and should prevent its functioning, in so far as we can? To accept office and ministry, under the conditions of the Act, is to negative our rejection of it and to stand self-condemned. National honour and self-respect cannot accept this position, for it would inevitably mean our cooperation in some measure with the repressive apparatus of imperialism, and we would become partners in this repression and in the exploitation of our people. Of

course, we would try to champion the rights of the people and would protest against repression, but as ministers under the Act, we could do very little to give relief and we would have to share responsibility for the administration with the apparatus of imperialism, for the deficit budgets, for the suppression of labour and the peasantry. It is always dangerous to assume responsibility without power, even in democratic countries; it will be far worse with this undemocratic constitution, hedged in with safeguards and reserved powers and mortgaged funds, where we have to follow the rules and regulations of our opponents' making. Imperialism sometimes talks of cooperation but the kind of cooperation it wants is usually known as surrender, and the ministers who accept office will have to do so at the price of surrender of much that they might have stood for in public. That is a humiliating position which self-respect itself should prevent one from accepting. For our great national organisation to be party to it is to give up the very basis and background of our existence.

Self-respect apart, common sense tells us that we can lose much and gain little by acceptance of office in terms of the Act. We cannot get much out of it, or else our criticism of the Act itself is wrong, and we know it is not so. The big things for which we stand will fade into the background and petty issues will absorb our attention, and we shall lose ourselves in compromises and communal tangles, and disillusion with us will spread over the land. If we have a majority, and only then can the question of acceptance of office arise, we shall be in a position to dominate the situation and so prevent reactionaries and imperialists from profiting by it. Office will not add to our real strength, it will only weaken us by making us responsible for many things that we utterly dislike.

Again, if we are in a minority, the question of office does not arise. It may be, however, that we are on the verge of a majority and with the cooperation of other individuals and groups we can obtain office. There is nothing inherently wrong in our acting together with others on specific issues of civil liberty or economic or other demands, provided we do not compromise on any principle. But I can imagine few things more dangerous and more likely to injure us than the acceptance of office on the sufferance of others. That would be an intolerable position.

It is said that our chances at the elections would increase if we announce that we were prepared to accept office and ministries. Perhaps that might be so, for all manner of other people, eager for the spoils and patronage that office gives, would then hurry to join us. Does any Congressman imagine that this would be a desirable development

of that we would gain strength thereby? Again it is said that more voters would vote for us if they knew that we were going to form ministries. That might happen if we deluded them with false promises of what we might do for them within the Act; but a quick nemesis would follow our failure to give effect to those promises, and failure would be inevitable if the promises were worthwhile.

There is only one straight course open to us, to go to the people with our programme and make it clear to them that we cannot give effect to the major items in it under present conditions, and therefore, while we use the platform of the legislatures to press that programme, we seek to end these imperialist bodies by creating deadlocks in them whenever we are in a position to do so. Those deadlocks should preferably take place on those programmes so that the masses might learn how ineffective for their purposes are these legislatures.

One fact is sometimes forgotten—the provision for second chambers in many of the provinces. These chambers will be reactionary and will be exploited by the Governor to check any forward tendencies in the lower house. They will make the position of a minister, who seeks advance, even more difficult and unenviable.

Some people have suggested, though their voices are hushed now, that provincial autonomy might be given on this office issue and each provincial Congress committee should be empowered to decide it for its own province. An astonishing and fatal suggestion playing into the hands of our imperialist rulers. We who have laboured for Indian unity can never be parties to any proposal which tends to lessen that unity. That way lies disaster and a disruption of the forces working for freedom. If we agree to this, why then should we also not agree to the communal issue being decided provincially, or many other issues, where individual provinces might think differently? First issues will sink into the background, independence itself will fade away, and the narrowest provincialism raise its ugly head. Our policy must be uniform for the whole of India, and it must place first things first, and independence as the first thing of all.

So I am convinced that for the Congress to favour the acceptance of office, or even to hesitate and waver about it, would be a vital error. It will be a pit from which it would be difficult for us to come out. Practical statesmanship is against it, as well as the traditions of the Congress and the mentality we have sought to develop in the people. Psychologically, any such lead might have disastrous consequences. If we stand for revolutionary changes, as we do, we have to cultivate a revolutionary mentality among our people, and anything that goes against it is harmful to our cause.

This psychological aspect is important. For we must never forget, and never delude our masses into imagining, that we can get any real power or real freedom through working these legislatures. We may use them certainly to advance our cause to some extent, but the burden of the struggle for freedom must fall on the masses, and primarily, therefore, our effective work must lie outside these legislatures. Strength will come from the masses and from our work among them and our organisation of them.

Of secondary importance though the work in the legislatures is, we may not treat it casually and allow it to become a hindrance to our other work. Therefore it is necessary for the Congress, through its executive, to have direct control over the elections and the programme placed before the country, as well as the activity in the legislatures. Such control will inevitably be exercised through committees and boards appointed for the purpose, but the continued existence of semi-autonomous parliamentary boards seems to be undesirable. Provision should also be made for a periodical review of all such activities, so that Congressmen in general and the country should keep in touch with them and should influence them.

We have considered the provincial elections which, it is said, may take place early next year. The time is far off yet, and it is by no means impossible that these elections may not take place for a much longer time or may not take place at all, and the new Act may take its rightful place in oblivion. Much may happen in the course of the next year, and war is ever on the horizon, to upset the schemes and time-tables of our rulers. But we cannot speculate on this, and we have to make provision for contingencies. That decision might even have been delayed, but dangerous and compromising tendencies seek to influence Congress policy, and the Congress cannot remain silent when the issue is raised and its whole future is in the balance.

The provincial legislatures may come, but few persons, I imagine, are confident about the coming of the federal part of this unholy structure. So far as we are concerned, we shall fight against it to our utmost strength, and the primary object of our creating deadlocks in the provinces and making the new Act difficult of functioning, is to kill the federation. With the federation dead, the provincial end of the Act will also go and leave the slate clean for the people of India to write on. That writing, whatever it be, can never admit the right of the Indian states to continue as feudal and autocratic monarchies. They have long survived their day, propped up by an alien power, and have become the strangest anomalies in a changing world. The future has no place for autocracy or feudalism; a free India cannot

tolerate the subjection of many of its children and their deprivation of human rights, nor can it ever agree to a dissection of its body and a cutting up of its limbs. If we stand for any human, political, social or economic rights for ourselves, we stand for those identical rights for the people of the states.

I have referred to the terrible suppression of civil liberties by the British Government in India. But in the states matters are even worse, and though we know that the real power behind those states is that of British imperialism, this tragic suppression of our brothers by their own countrymen is of painful significance. Indian rulers and their ministers have spoken and acted increasingly in the approved fascist manner, and their record during the past few years especially has been one of aggressive opposition to our national demands. States which are considered advanced ban the Congress organisation and offer insult to our national flag, and decree new laws to suppress the press.* What shall we say of the more backward and primitive states?

There is one more matter concerning the constitution Act which has given rise to much controversy. This is the communal decision. Many people have condemned it strongly and, I think, rightly; few have a good word for it. My own viewpoint is, however, somewhat different from that of others. I am not concerned so much with what it gives to this group or that but more so with the basic idea behind it. It seeks to divide India into numerous separate compartments, chiefly on a religious basis, and thus makes the development of democracy and economic policy very difficult. Indeed the communal decision and democracy can never go together. We have to admit that, under present circumstances, and so long as our policies are dominated by middle class elements, we cannot do away with communalism altogether. But to make a necessary exception in favour of our Muslim or Sikh friends is one thing, to spread this evil principle to numerous other groups and thus to divide up the electoral machinery and the legislature into many compartments is a far more dangerous proposition. If we wish to function democratically the proposed communal arrangement will have to go, and I have no doubt that it will go. But it will not go by the methods adopted by the aggressive opponents of the decision. These methods result inevitably in perpetuating the decision, for they help in continuing a situation which prevents any reconsideration.

I have not been enamoured of the past Congress policy in regard to the communal question and its attempts to make pacts and compromises. Yet essentially I think it was based on a sound instinct. First

* The hoisting of the national flag had been banned in the state of Mysore.

of all the Congress always put independence first and other questions, including the communal one, second, and refused to allow any of those other questions to take pride of place. Secondly, it argued that the communal problem had arisen from a certain set of circumstances which enabled the third party to exploit the other two. In order to solve it, one had either to get rid of the third party (and that means independence), or get rid of that set of circumstances, which meant a friendly approach by the parties concerned and an attempt to soften the prejudice and fear that filled them. Thirdly, that the majority community must show generosity in the matter to allay the fear and suspicion that minorities, even though unreasonably, might have.

That analysis is, I think, perfectly sound. I would add that, in my opinion, a real solution of the problem will only come when economic issues, affecting all religious groups and cutting across communal boundaries, arise. Apart from the upper middle classes, who live in hopes of office and patronage, the masses and the lower middle classes have to face identical political and economic problems. It is odd and significant that all the communal demands of any group, of which so much is heard, have nothing whatever to do with these problems of the masses and the lower middle classes.

It is also significant that the principal communal leaders, Hindu or Muslim or others, are political reactionaries, quite apart from the communal question. It is sad to think how they have sided with British imperialism in vital matters, how they have given their approval to the suppression of civil liberty, how during these years of agony they have sought to gain narrow profit for their group at the expense of the larger cause of freedom. With them there can be no cooperation, for that would mean cooperation with reaction. But I am sure that with the larger masses and the middle classes, who may have temporarily been led away by the specious claims of their communal leaders, there must be the fullest cooperation, and out of that cooperation will come a fairer solution of this problem.

I am afraid I cannot get excited over this communal issue, important as it is temporarily. It is after all a side issue, and it can have no real importance in the larger scheme of things. Those who think of it as the major issue think in terms of British imperialism continuing permanently in this country. Without that basis of thought, they would not attach so much importance to one of its inevitable offshoots. I have no such fear and so my vision of a future India contains neither imperialism nor communalism.

Yet the present difficulty remains and has to be faced. Especially our sympathy must go to the people of Bengal who have suffered most

from these communal decisions, as well as from the heavy hand of the government. Whenever opportunity offers to improve their situation in a friendly way, we must seize it. But always the background of our action must be the national struggle for independence and the social freedom of the masses.

I have referred previously to the growing divorce between our organisation and the masses. Individually many of us still have influence with the masses and our word carries weight with them, and who can measure the love and reverence of Indian millions for our leader, Gandhi? And yet organisationally we have lost that intimate touch that we had. The social reform activities of the khadi and village industries and Harijan organisations keep large numbers of our comrades in touch with the masses and those contacts bear fruit. But they are essentially non-political and so, politically, we have largely lost touch. There are many reasons for this and some are beyond our control. Our present Congress constitution is, I feel, not helpful in developing these contacts or in encouraging enough the democratic spirit in its primary committees. These committees are practically rolls of voters who meet only to elect delegates or representatives, and take no part in the discussion or the formation of policy.

It is interesting to read in that monumental and impressive record, the Webbs' new book on Russia, how the whole Soviet structure is based on a wide and living democratic foundation. Russia is not supposed to be a democratic country after the Western pattern, and yet we find the essentials of democracy present in far greater degree amongst the masses there than anywhere else. The six hundred thousand towns and villages there have a vast democratic organisation, each with its own soviet, constantly discussing, debating, criticising, helping in the formulation of policy, electing representatives to higher committees. This organization as citizens covers the entire population over 18 years of age. There is yet another vast organization of the people as producers, and a third, equally vast, as consumers. And thus scores of millions of men and women are constantly taking part in the discussion of public affairs, and actually in the administration of the country. There has been no such practical application of the democratic process in history.

All this is, of course, utterly beyond us, for it requires a change in the political and economic structure and much else before we can experiment that way. But we can profit by that example still, and try in our own limited way to develop democracy in the lowest rungs of the Congress ladder and make the primary committee a living organization.

An additional method for us to increase our contacts with the masses is to organize them as producers and then affiliate such organizations to the Congress or have full cooperation between the two. Such organizations of producers as exist today, such as trade unions and peasant unions, as well as other anti-imperialist organisations, could also be brought within this sphere of mutual cooperation for the good of the masses and for the struggle for national freedom. Thus the Congress could have an individual as well as a corporate membership, and retaining its individual character, could influence, and be influenced by, other mass elements.

These are big changes that I have hinted at, and I am by no means sure how they can be brought about, or whether it is possible to go far in this direction in the near future. Still we must move to some extent, at least, if we are to have our roots in the soil of India and draw life and strength from its millions. The subject is fascinating but complicated and can only be tackled by an expert committee which I trust will be appointed on behalf of the Congress. The report of that committee must be freely discussed so as to get the widest backing for it.

All this will take us to the next Congress. Meanwhile perhaps some urgent changes are needed in our constitution to remove anomalies and avoid difficulties. Owing to my absence I have had little experience of the working of the new constitution, and cannot make any concrete suggestions. The reduction in the numbers of delegates⁹ and All India Congress Committee members would be, to some extent, desirable if there was a background of widespread activity in the primary and secondary committees. Without it, it makes us even less responsive to mass opinion, and, therefore, an increase seems desirable. But the real solution is to increase the interest and day to day activity of the lower committees.

I have been told that the manual labour franchise¹⁰ has not been a success, and has led to a great deal of evasion. If that is so a change is desirable, for a constitution must be such as can be worked easily and without subterfuge.

The Congress is an all-inclusive body and represents many interests, but essentially it is a political organization with various subsidiary and allied organizations like the Spinners Association and the Village

9. At the Bombay session the number of delegates had been reduced from 6,000 to 2,000.

10. One of the conditions laid down by the Congress constitution was that for eligibility to election to an office a person should have performed some manual labour on behalf of the Congress in the form of spinning or other allied activities.

Industries Association.¹¹ These allied organizations work in the economic field, but they do not seek directly to remove the burdens of the peasantry under the present system of land tenure. Nor can the Congress, situated as it is, wholly function as a peasant organization, although in many provinces it has espoused the cause of the peasantry and brought them much relief. It seems to me necessary that the Congress should encourage the formation of peasant unions as well as workers' unions, and cooperate with such as already exist, so that the day to day struggle of the masses might be carried on on the basis of their economic demands and other grievances. This identification of the Congress with the economic struggle of the masses will bring us nearer to them and nearer to freedom than anything else. I would welcome also the organization of other special interests, like those of the women, in the general framework of our national struggle for freedom. The Congress would be in a position to coordinate all these vital activities and thus to base itself on the widest possible mass foundation.

There has been some talk of a militant programme and militant action. I do not know what exactly is meant, but if direct action on a national scale or civil disobedience are meant, then I would say that I see no near prospect of them. Let us not indulge in tall talk before we are ready for big action. Our business today is to put our house in order, to sweep away the defeatist mentality of some people, and to build up our organization with its mass affiliations, as well as to work amongst the masses. The time may come, and that sooner perhaps than we expect, when we might be put to the test. Let us get ready for that test. Civil disobedience and the like cannot be switched on and off when we feel like doing so. It depends on many things, some of which are beyond our control, but in these days of revolutionary change and constantly recurring crises in the world, events often move faster than we do. We shall not lack for opportunities.

The major problem of India today is that of the land—of rural poverty and unemployment and a thoroughly out of date land system. A curious combination of circumstances has held back India during the past few generations, and the political and economic garments it wears no longer fit it and are torn and tattered. In some ways our agrarian conditions are not unlike those of France a hundred and fifty years ago, prior to the great revolution. They cannot continue so for long. At the same time we have become parts of international capitalism and we

11. The All India Village Industries Association was formed at the Bombay session on 27 October 1934 to work for the revival and encouragement of village industries and the moral and physical advancement of the villagers.

suffer the pains and crises which afflict this decaying system. As a result of these elemental urges and conflicts of world forces what will emerge in India none can say. But we can say with confidence that the present order has reached the evening of its day, and it is up to us to try to mould the future as we would like it to be.

The world is filled with rumours and alarms of war. In Abyssinia bloody and cruel war has already gone on for many months,¹² and we have watched anew how hungry and predatory imperialism behaves in its mad search for colonial domains. We have watched also with admiration the brave fight of the Ethiopians for their freedom against heavy odds. You will permit me, I feel sure, to greet them on your behalf and express our deep sympathy for them. Their struggle is something more than a local struggle. It is one of the first effective checks by an African people on an advancing imperialism and already it has had far-reaching consequences.

In the Far East also, war hovers on the horizon and we see an Eastern imperialism advancing methodically and pitilessly over ancient China and dreaming of world empire. Imperialism shows its claws wherever it may be, in the West or in the East.

In Europe an aggressive fascism or nazism steps continuously on the brink of war and vast armed camps arise in preparation for what seems to be the inevitable end of all this. Nations join hands to fight other nations, and progressive forces in each country ally themselves to fight the fascist menace.

Where do we come in in this awful game? What part shall we play in this approaching tragedy? It is difficult to say. But we must not permit ourselves to be passive tools exploited for imperialist ends. It must be our right to say whether we join a war or not, and without that consent there should be no cooperation from us. When the time comes we may have little say in the matter, and so it becomes necessary for the Congress to declare clearly now its opposition to India's participation in any imperialist war, and every war that will be waged by imperialist powers will be an imperialist war, whatever the excuses put forward might be. Therefore we must keep out of it and not allow Indian lives and Indian money to be sacrificed.

To the progressive forces of the world, to those who stand for human freedom and the breaking of political and social bonds, we offer our full cooperation in their struggle against imperialism and fascist reaction, for we realise that our struggle is a common one. Our grievance is not against any people or any country as such, and we know that

12. Ethiopia was invaded by Italy on 3 October 1935.

even in imperialist England, which throttles us, there are many who do not love imperialism and who stand for freedom.

During this period of difficulty and storm and stress, inevitably our minds and hearts turn to our great leader who has guided us and inspired us by his dynamic personality these many years. Physical ill health prevents him now from taking his full share in public activities.¹³ Our good wishes go out to him for his rapid and complete recovery, and with those wishes is the selfish desire to have him back again amongst us. We have differed from him in the past and we shall differ from him in the future about many things, and it is right that each one of us should act up to his convictions. But the bonds that hold us together are stronger and more vital than our differences, and the pledges we took together still ring in our ears. How many of us have that passionate desire for Indian independence and the raising of our poverty-stricken masses which consumes him? Many things he taught us—long years ago it seems now—fearlessness and discipline, and the will to sacrifice ourselves for the larger cause. That lesson may have grown dim but we have not forgotten it, nor can we ever forget him who has made us what we are and raised India again from the depths. The pledge of independence that we took together still remains to be redeemed, and we wait again for him to guide us with his wise counsel.

But no leader, however great he be, can shoulder the burden single-handed; we must all share it to the best of our ability and not seek helplessly to rely on others to perform miracles. Leaders come and go; many of our best-loved captains and comrades have left us all too soon, but India goes on and so does India's struggle for freedom. It may be that many of us must suffer still and die so that India may live and be free. The promised land may yet be far from us and we may have to march wearily through the deserts, but who will take away from us that deathless hope which has survived the scaffold and immeasurable suffering and sorrow; who will dare to crush the spirit of India which has found rebirth again and again after so many crucifixions?

13. Mahatma Gandhi was present at the Congress session but did not participate in the deliberations.

11. Concluding Remarks at the A.I.C.C.¹

I congratulate you on your successfully helping the Chair in conducting the deliberations of both the subjects committee and the A.I.C.C.

I am happy to take an active part in Congress work with my comrades after some years.

No one knows my weakness better than myself. I know you have put up with my interruptions and heard me patiently. The other day Mr. Satyamurti stopped me during one of my outbursts; I immediately recognised my fault and expressed my regret; I know that all of you have overlooked several other minor errors on my part. I must thank you all for bearing with me. You possibly do not know that I feel things very much and feel them very intensely.

1. Lucknow, 14 April 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 15 April 1936.

12. On Industrialization¹

I had been so overworked that I had not had time to see much of the exhibition, which shows the lines on which small industries can be developed in the villages to improve the economic conditions and remove the unemployment which is breaking the back of the people. I believe in large-scale industrialization but I admit that mass production and village industries on a small scale can go hand in hand. The real problem of India is that of improving the condition of the teeming millions. This cannot be done so long as the present laws are not abolished and exploitation is not ended. Both the social and capitalistic structures must be changed. You can see in Lucknow, taluqdars' palaces, while in the same city stand houses which can be brought down by a kick. Under the present system of exploitation the poor are becoming poorer, and the rich and lazy, richer. The people cannot bear heavy taxation; for instance, the salt tax and other taxes press heavily on the people for whom the smallest burden is unbearable.

1. Speech at the Congress exhibition, Lucknow, 14 April 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 15 April 1936.

13. Concluding Remarks at the Congress Session¹

It is customary on such occasions when all business is over for someone to indulge in a funeral oration. So Mrs. Sarojini Naidu has come here uninvited to deliver that oration about the Congress and about the President of that Congress who has sat on the high pedestal for these three days and is now going back into oblivion.

1. Lucknow, 15 April 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 16 April 1936.

14. On the Selection of the New Working Committee¹

According to the new constitution, the responsibility of selection is now thrown on the President. Personally, I do not agree with the new provision.² The Congress Working Committee, as the executive, will have to implement the resolutions passed by the Congress. I am of opinion that it should be a compact body ensuring full team spirit. I feel that there is a necessity to reconsider the clause in this connection at the earliest opportunity.

I had not till now given much thought as to who should constitute the new Working Committee, because I was anxious to know the final decisions the Congress was going to take regarding the several subjects on which there was difference of opinion and clash of ideas. It is my feeling that even if there are differences, we should make it possible to pull together with mutual understanding. The Working Committee is the biggest executive of the Congress and is responsible for all actions of the Indian National Congress during the year. I am not in favour of allowing small committees to decide big issues, such as are sure to come

1. Speech at the A.I.C.C. session which met after the conclusion of the plenary session, Lucknow, 15 April 1936. From *The Hindu*, 16 April 1936.
2. Article XII of the Congress constitution as amended at the Bombay session on 28 October 1934 stipulated that "the President of the annual session shall for his term of office select fourteen members of the A.I.C.C. to constitute his Working Committee including not more than three general secretaries and two treasurers of the Congress."

before the Working Committee. But then the All India Congress Committee generally meets only four or five times a year, and therefore the All India Congress Committee should meet more often and should keep itself in constant touch with provincial committees and primary four-anna members, who should be able to apprise the A.I.C.C. of the trend of feeling among the primary members.

It is also up to us to see that the clash of ideas, which is bound to occur, should not impair our strength. We welcome new ideas, and ours is a living organisation and there is nothing to despair if there is a clash of ideas and difference of opinion. As a matter of fact, it is an essential part of progress. Each province in India is a nation by itself, and has its own problems and questions to deal with and, therefore, there is nothing unnatural if there is a clash of ideas and opinion. In order to get over such difficulties, it is necessary to have frequent exchange of views and draw the benefit out of such exchanges.

There are several duties which we have to fulfil, and it is our duty to know clearly what the demands of the people are and how to fulfil them. You witnessed, during this Congress, a clash of ideas. I have been out of this country for a long time. When I first knew about the clash of ideas, I was not at all surprised, as I thought it was an essential part of progress. These clashes of ideas are bound to increase. I gave my opinion on several matters which came before the Congress. There was no implicit agreement between me and the Congress and, therefore, I have no grievance about it. Disunion will weaken us. As the English proverb says, "let us hang together, or we hang separately."

As regards the formation of the Working Committee, I consider it a great responsibility. The constitution says that members should be in close agreement with the President. The Working Committee is the executive of the Congress and it has to do what the Congress directs it to do. It must have team work. It might be that I might be able to select a Committee, which might agree with me. They might also disagree with me.

No President would like to have an executive which cannot see eye to eye with him. Therefore I thought why should I not take the All India Congress Committee into my confidence and make it also responsible for selecting the new Working Committee; but this will surprise the A.I.C.C. and it will not be proper as some of the members have already left. We will be meeting sooner or later. I should have placed the names of the new Working Committee members before you, but as I had no time to do this, I shall announce the Committee at the earliest opportunity.

I assure the Committee of full cooperation, and ask you to bring your grievances before me. I would request the members of the A.I.C.C. to take steps to implement the resolutions passed at the open session as soon as you return to your respective places. You should give effect to the provisions of the amended constitution immediately. I make a personal appeal to the members to think of the agrarian programme and immediately get in touch with the provincial, district and taluka Congress committees without waiting for a circular from the A.I.C.C. office, and thus get the material ready.

15. Statement on the New Working Committee¹

The constitution of the Congress directs the President to select the members of the Working Committee for his term of office. This duty and this burden thus devolve upon me and I have given this matter the most careful and earnest consideration. Inevitably, I have consulted many colleagues and sought their guidance in the matter. This became specially incumbent on me as I was placed in a somewhat peculiar position. As President, I was the chief executive of the Congress and was supposed to represent that great organisation. But in some major matters of policy I do not represent the majority viewpoint to which expression has been given in the resolutions of the Lucknow Congress. Thus the Working Committee could not, at the same time, represent, on these matters, my views as well as those of the majority. I have felt that it would be improper for me, under these circumstances, to select a Committee entirely in consonance with my views and that the views of the majority of Congressmen, as expressed in the open sessions of the Congress, must prevail. I was tempted to shift the burden of selection on the All India Congress Committee, so that this Committee might choose such persons to represent it as it thought fit and proper. But after much thought I have come to the conclusion that this would not be a proper course to adopt and I may not shirk the responsibility that has been cast on me. I have tried therefore to form a Committee which represents mainly the majority viewpoint, but which also contains some

1. Lucknow, 16 April 1936. *Congress Bulletin*, 20 April 1936. Extracts. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 6-7.

representatives of the minority.² Such a selection has its disadvantages. I have endeavoured, however, to make it a Committee which, I hope, will pull together in the struggle against imperialism and serve the Congress and the country worthily in this great struggle. I trust that my colleagues of the All India Congress Committee and Congressmen in general will give this Committee their loyal cooperation and support and strengthen its hands in the great work before us, so that we can build up a joint and impregnable anti-imperialist front.

The Committee is limited, under the constitution, to fifteen members, including the President. It is impossible to include all those whom I would like to have in it. I regret especially that some old and valued members, who have served on the Working Committee in past years, have been left out of it. I hope, however, that we shall continue to have their full cooperation and that we shall frequently avail ourselves of their advice....

2. Out of 13 members, only three, Narendra Deva, Jayaprakash Narayan and Achyut Patwardhan, were socialists.

16. On Mass Action¹

Question: What are the potentialities of the Congress majorities in provincial legislatures?

Jawaharlal Nehru: Success in elections to the legislatures by itself cannot be a decisive step towards the attainment of complete independence. The real step must be based on activity outside the legislatures, but the elections, as well as the subsequent activity in the legislatures, might be made to fit in with outside activity, and thus strengthen each other.

Q: Will complete independence precede reconstruction of Indian society on a socialist basis, or will the two happen simultaneously?

JN: Ordinarily, national independence will precede social reconstruction, but it is possible that one may follow the other within a short

1. Interview to the press, Allahabad, 19 April 1936. From *The Hindu*, 21 April 1936.

space of time, or might even be almost simultaneous. This depends on many factors, national and international, and specially on economic conditions prevailing in the country. There is at present in India a vital need for economic change, that is, a basis for both political and social movements, and no political change which does not help in solving the economic problems of the country, can be on a stable basis.

It is true that political change involves elimination of the third party, that is to say, foreign imperialism, which will inevitably result in weakening greatly the reactionary elements in India itself. Many of these are almost part and parcel of that imperialism and will stand or fall with it. Some have a separate existence as well, and will survive even political freedom for a while.

Q: For the attainment of complete independence will India have ultimately to resort to civil disobedience and non-payment of taxes, if and when possible, or do you suggest some other methods?

JN: All attempts at fundamental changes, political or social, must be based on mass movements. Civil disobedience has been a type of this mass movement which has largely fitted in with the existing conditions of India as well as the Indian temperament. Its background is likely to continue. Mass movements of this type can have nothing conspiratorial about them. Only small groups function in that way, and they function ineffectively.

Q: How will a world war help India in furtherance of her political and economic objectives?

JN: A world war may help the Indian struggle or hinder it. It is impossible to say what the result of such a war would be and how it would affect India. We may not look forward to such an upheaval in the hope that it would necessarily benefit India, and so far as war or a very big economic crisis is symptomatic of the break-up of the existing economic structure of the world, it is a helpful sign, but it does not necessarily follow that the result of such a war would lead to the establishment of a higher social order. Ordinarily, that ought to be the result, but this result may be delayed on account of widespread destruction and ruin caused by war. It is therefore necessary for us to strengthen our forces that today stand against imperialism and war, and, at the same time, prepare ourselves for suitable action in case a crisis breaks out.

'The Lucknow Congress resolution on the war danger gives a clear lead on this issue.² It is not an academic lead but a practical one, and we must try our utmost to make the nation understand it and act up to it when the time comes.

Q: Do you apprehend any crisis at an early date in your "cabinet" over the immediate programme of the Congress?

JN: A crisis does not come with previous warning. In my opinion there is no reason why a crisis should arise when all members are anxious to work with team spirit in the interest of the country.

Q: What is your opinion about the business transacted at the Lucknow session?

JN: I do not like to express my opinion in one short interview. I might think over and issue a statement surveying the Congress' attainments etc., during the last session.

Q: Is it not necessary to call a meeting of the A.I.C.C. soon to decide the question of office acceptance, especially so as the government scheme for conducting the next elections is nearing completion and the A.I.C.C. will have to participate in the preparation of electoral rolls etc. if the Congress is to contest the elections?

JN: Events will certainly be taken into consideration in calling a meeting of the A.I.C.C. but no date can be anticipated yet.

Q: What is your reaction to Lord Linlithgow's statement that he would try to keep in touch with various leaders of different political parties?³

JN: I am not prepared to answer this question as it is somewhat premature.

2. The Congress declared its "opposition" to India's participation in any "imperialist war".
3. The Viceroy in his broadcast on 18 April 1936 had said that the successful working of representative government required that he should be in touch with the leaders of all political parties.

17. Circular to P. C. Cs¹

Allahabad
April 22, 1936

Dear Comrade,

Now that the Congress is over, I venture to address you and to draw your attention to some of its principal resolutions. These resolutions cast a responsibility on all of us and we have to take steps to give effect to them in so far as we can. I trust that you will immediately circularise your district and local committees on this subject and request them to hold committee meetings, as well as public meetings, in order to give full publicity to the Congress resolutions and plan out their future work in accordance with them.

Our office has already addressed you on the subject of the changes in the Congress constitution, and copies of the amended constitution and the Congress resolutions are being sent to you separately. Please study this constitution carefully and arrange to take early steps to give effect to the amendments and the transitory provisions. This will probably result in enlarging your committees and in adding to your A.I.C.C. members. This desirable change at the top should be accompanied by a livening up of the primary committees so that even our primary members might take more interest and greater part in our day to day activities. With a view to bring this about, as well as to broaden the mass basis of the Congress, a committee has been appointed.² This committee proposes to issue a questionnaire to you in order to have the benefit of your experience and advice.

The long and comprehensive resolution on the suppression of civil liberties is one to which the fullest publicity should be given and it should be repeated at public meetings.³ Special point is given to this resolution by the arrest and detention of Shri Subhas Chandra Bose as he was on his way to attend the Congress. A suggestion has been made that all-India demonstrations should take place on a particular day to mark our indignation at this further outrage of public opinion and to send our greetings to our comrade Subhas Bose. I commend this suggestion to you and hope that such meetings will be held as

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, National Archives of India.

2. The committee consisted of Rajendra Prasad, Jairamdas Doulatram and Jayaprakash Narayan.

3. The Congress drew public attention to the widespread and intensive suppression of civil and personal liberties in India by the British Government.

widely as possible on Sunday, May 10th. At these meetings, besides the special resolution on Subhas Babu's detention, there should also be a repetition of the Congress resolution on the suppression of civil liberties.

Another Congress resolution which requires publicity is the one on war danger. The importance and urgency of this should be stressed and the implications explained to our people. The fact that it is not merely an academic resolution but one which affects us, nationally and individually, and which is likely to have far-reaching consequences, should be made clear.

Every Congressman will realise the great importance of the resolution on the agrarian programme.⁴ This resolution is still incomplete and in order to fill in the gaps and make it a complete whole, the cooperation of provincial Congress committees, their local committees and kisan sabhas is desired. May I suggest, therefore, that you should ask your local committees immediately to consider this problem and to confer with their primary committees, so that the widest possible discussion of this vital question takes place? Each P.C.C. should then make its own recommendations to the Working Committee.

As you are aware, the resolution which was debated most in the Congress was the one on the new Government of India Act. Whatever the differences in regard to this might have been, one fact stands clear: that the Act has to be combated and rejected. On that there is unanimity and it is desirable to stress this as well as to make this the plank of our anti-imperialist programme. The Congress stands firmly for independence and anti-imperialism and it is only with this background that we can consider any question. The constructive side of our rejection is the constituent assembly and full publicity should be given to this in public meetings. The slogan of the constituent assembly must be popularised and explained to the masses.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. The Congress resolved that the appalling poverty of the peasantry was "due to a repressive land tenure intensified in recent years by the great slump" and called upon the provincial Congress committees to make suitable recommendations.

18. Interview to Railwaymen¹

Question: What benefit do you expect to derive from cooperation with die-hards?²

Jawaharlal Nehru: I seek to derive benefit by utilizing all forces available in the country and making use of the strong nationalistic feeling in the country.

Q: What about the squabbles within the provincial Congress committees?

JN: The Congress might not work properly in all provinces, but it is a matter for investigation after facts are reported.

Q: Is it possible to have a socialistic organization without capturing the state?

JN: Both may come simultaneously though it is difficult without obtaining political power. But no power can come without the spread and popularization of correct socialistic ideology.

1. Nagpur, 25 April 1936. From *The Hindustan Times*, 27 April 1936.

2. Old members of the Working Committee.

19. Subhas Bose and Foreign Propaganda¹

In the course of the discussions at the subjects committee meetings at Lucknow on April 14, my attention was drawn by a member to a public statement made by Sjt. Subhas Chandra Bose, prior to his arrest, in which he had stated that the Working Committee had declined to vest him with a representative capacity on behalf of the

1. Statement to the press, Wardha, 28 April 1936. *The Indian Annual Register*, January-June 1936, Vol. I, pp. 256-257. Jawaharlal issued earlier a shorter statement on the same subject at Lucknow on 14 April 1936. That statement has not been reprinted.

Congress for carrying on foreign work.² I was asked if any communication asking for such authority had been received by the then President of the A.I.C.C. or by the Working Committee and whether the Committee had considered it.

As I had no personal knowledge, I asked Rajendra Babu and he told me that during his whole period of office, that is nearly a year and a half prior to the Lucknow Congress, he had received no communication from Sjt. Subhas Bose on the subject and thus the question of its being considered by the Working Committee had not arisen.

It has now been pointed out to me that Sjt. Subhas Bose issued a statement to the press on this subject in July 1935 and various press agencies and newspapers, presuming that the Working Committee would consider the subject, made forecasts and commented on it in August 1935.

May I point out that these forecasts and unauthorised reports of proceedings of Working Committee meetings are wholly unreliable. I have been astonished at reading in the press during the last month about matters which had never been even touched upon during our Committee meetings. It is quite clear that all the references in the press in August 1935 to an alleged letter from Sjt. Subhas Bose being considered by the Working Committee were without foundation. No such letter was received by Rajendra Babu or the A.I.C.C. office, no such letter is to be found in our office files, and there is no mention of any such discussion in the detailed minutes of the Working Committee meeting. Neither the then President nor the Secretary has any recollection of even an informal letter on the subject. It is difficult for them to remember now if they saw the press statement at the time, but in any event the Working Committee does not usually proceed on the basis of press statements as these might be incorrect.

I find no clear reference to a letter in any of Sjt. Bose's statements. It is possible that the misapprehension in the minds of the public has arisen owing to some part of Sjt. Subhas Bose's statement being construed to refer to a letter. It is also possible that a letter he sent was intercepted by government.

2. Subhas Bose in a letter to the United Press had stated that he felt he could not "render any substantial service to our cause while remaining in Europe", as "the Working Committee of the Congress have declined to vest me with any representative capacity. I have felt that my achievement has been far less than what it should have been...in these circumstances my place is among my countrymen at home."

On the larger question of foreign propaganda I do not wish to say anything in this statement. I have long been in favour of our developing foreign contacts and a world outlook. But when we come to the manner of doing so, the subject is full of difficulty. Under present conditions in Europe and in India I doubt if it is desirable or possible to have official representatives of the Congress in foreign countries. This may come later. I imagine that well-known Congressmen can do good work in foreign countries even without a special authorisation. Personally I would prefer to be such an independent Congressman when I go abroad, than one whose words have to be weighed carefully lest they commit the Congress. Whenever I spoke in Europe during my last stay there I prefaced my remarks by saying that I did not speak officially in the name of the Congress and could not commit it. I did so even after my election to the Lucknow Congress presidentship.³

It is our misfortune that Subhas Babu is cut off from us at present. If he were available I am sure the misapprehension in the minds of some people would be removed.

3. See *ante*, section 1, item 46.



AT THE LUCKNOW CONGRESS, APRIL, 1936





AT THE LUCKNOW CONGRESS, APRIL 1936

THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN I

1. Vote for Congress and Independence¹

Since my last visit to Nagpur in 1929, vast changes have taken place in the political history of the country. All these years we have put up a brave fight against a most powerful government. We might not have achieved our objective but we have been successful in rousing the spirit of the nation. It is only by such trials of strength that success can be achieved. There are ups and downs in life and if we lose heart in the fight the obstacles will increase. The question of independence should be uppermost in our minds and all other problems should be subordinate to it.

The Communal Award issue was brought about by the government in conformity with their policy of distracting the public mind from the main problem. Independence and communal representation cannot go together and no Congressman can support the Communal Award.

I cannot say when the elections under the new constitution will be held but whenever elections approach, new parties, some of them unheard of, spring up like mushrooms and canvass for support. Whatever the colour of these parties may be, they generally support the government. I will not ask you to cast a single vote in favour of the Congress if you do not wish to vote for independence. But you should not be carried away by false promises made by Congress opponents. It appears that Hindus and Muslims are engaged in a race for demonstrating their loyalty. Muslims have made it almost their profession to flatter the government and the Hindus are now imitating them in the hope of currying favours.

In the event of a sudden outbreak of war I cannot definitely say whether India will profit thereby, but the nation should discuss the question and be prepared to take a decision regarding participation in the war. The choice of participating in the war lies not with the Viceroy or the Secretary of State for India but rests with the nation.

As regards the carrying out of the agrarian programme of the Congress, the peasantry have to be organised on the basis of their day to day struggle, and with the formation of their committees in every village, have to be linked with the Congress which would then be a really powerful mass organisation. These primary committees should communicate

1. Speech at Nagpur, 25 April 1936. From *The Hindu*, 27 April 1936.

their proposals and demands to the provincial Congress committees and then to the A.I.C.C. Power should thus go upwards from below.

The country must organise protests against certain restrictions placed on civil liberties of citizens by the government so that further fetters may not be put on them. In my opinion the government attitude in respect of Subhas Chandra Bose is vindictive. It is the irony of fate that a man who returned to his motherland after several years should be incarcerated.

2. On the Dissensions in the Congress¹

I would like to mention at the outset that reports are appearing in the newspapers of the country about dissensions in the Congress. Some of them are true, but in spite of all that, we have pulled together, and I think we will do so in the future also. Our differences are those of principles and not of personalities and there is a strong desire on our part to continue to cooperate together.

The Lucknow Congress is another landmark in the history of the Congress and it will always be remembered in so far as its discussions related to principles. That is a sign of progress.

As regards the forthcoming elections to the provincial legislatures early next year, I would ask the people what they are going to do. Preparations in this connection have already started and vested interests like the zamindars and talukdars are organizing themselves for the occasion. I would ask those who are present to see that a candidate who seeks their votes either on individual merits or on some party ticket is loyal and honest to his or his party's principles, that the country's interests are safe in his hands and that he is not likely to betray the confidence placed in him. They should also see how he is going to solve the burning problems of the day, namely abject poverty, unemployment and like subjects, and what attitude he had adopted in the country's fight for independence.

The Congress has expressed in unequivocal terms what it thinks of the new constitution and how it is going to work inside the legislatures.

1. Speech at Lucknow, 4 May 1936. From *The Hindustan Times*, 5 May 1936.

The first step that the Congress will take will, no doubt, be to end this constitution. If the Congress fights the elections, its candidates will seek your votes on the Congress mandate and they will abide by the same.

I hope you are aware of the Congress decision to observe the Subhas Day on May 10 next. The country is endangered in respect of civil liberties and the government is ruthlessly suppressing the press, literature and hundreds of organizations in the country. In provinces like Bengal and the North West Frontier, a state of martial law prevails. I appeal to everyone to whatever school of thought he belongs to unite and raise his voice against such suppression of civil liberties. You know that an agitation was organized in the country against the Rowlatt Act. The present laws are much stronger and repressive. The Rowlatt Act, when compared with the present laws, seems to me as a charter of independence. I condemn the mentality which makes the people bear in silence all repression. I hope you will all attend, in large numbers, the Subhas Day meeting to voice your feelings against the suppression of civil liberties.

I would like you to educate the people as to the significance of the Congress resolution on future wars, namely that they must in no case permit themselves to be passive tools for exploitation and they must keep out of it and must not allow Indian lives and money to be sacrificed in enslaving the peoples of other nations.

I have faith in socialism and I believe that it is the only key to the solution of India's problems. Poverty, unemployment, degradation and subjection of the Indian people can only end through socialism. I admit that within the Congress there is a majority at present who are opposed to my views, but I hope that before long they will understand socialism in its true perspective and be converted to it. The government is busy in repressing the country not only politically but also economically. Economic exploitation of the country is very dangerous and the new Government of India Act strengthens the hands of the government to enslave economically the people with more firmness. I therefore request you to study these problems more deeply.

3. To Syed Mahmud¹

Allahabad

5.5.36

My dear Mahmud,

I read the letter you gave me carefully after your departure and I have read it again.² I wanted to write to you soon but stress of work and travelling prevented me.

I find it a little difficult to put my viewpoint before you. You imagine that perhaps after another talk I could help you to solve some problems which trouble you. Do you not remember that during the last dozen years or more we have had a fair number of talks and we have worked together? It is true that during the last four or five years we have not had much chance owing to my having been in prison or abroad. But even when I was out in between and you came to see me I noticed no special desire on your part to discuss any important matter with me. And now on my return I saw with some sorrow how very far you were from me in thought. In the Working Committee meetings I was completely isolated and there was not a single member to support me. You were struck by my address at Lucknow, but I have said and written a great deal on the same subject. Have you taken the trouble to read it? Have you indeed felt that you must try to study these subjects and try to understand my viewpoint? The last dozen years or more have been years of hard and continuous work for me, of self-education and study and thought. For many others they have also been years of study and mental growth. But others again have not taken the trouble to think or study and have remained vaguely where they were. But the world changes.

When you were here I had an hour's talk with you. I gave you the background of my thought. I had nothing more to say. After that it was for you to enquire and ask questions. But you remain quiet and expect me to probe into your mind. That I cannot do, especially as other persons and matters are continually demanding attention.

We are today faced by a critical situation—not because of government but because of ourselves. There is tremendous mental conflict in India. Vast elemental forces are moving and coming into conflict. Personalities do not count for much when this happens, though no doubt they

1. Syed Mahmud Papers, N.M.M.L.

2. Mahmud wrote that he wanted to talk to Jawaharlal to clarify some doubts. He asked Jawaharlal to refrain from criticising the government in order to remain free and carry on his work for the Congress.

have their role to play. I am afraid for you politics is a game of personalities. Going to jail or not is neither here nor there. Nobody wants to go to jail but there are issues which are more vital and it is time we thought of them.

Come here whenever you feel like it. You are always welcome. But do not expect me to talk to you in the air. If you wish to discuss a subject with me I shall gladly do so. The invitation must come from you.

I am going to Bombay on the 14th for a week.

Love,

Yours affly.,
Jawahar

4. On the Strike of Sweepers in Broach¹

May 6, 1936

Dear Comrade,

I have received a number of letters about the strike of scavengers in Broach which seems to have been going on for some weeks now.² I do not know all the facts of the case and hence I am taking the liberty to enquire from you what the position is. Both from the larger political point of view as well as the equally important one of our raising the depressed classes, our sympathies must inevitably go out to these people at the bottom of the social ladder. I trust, therefore, that your local Congress committees, in the area concerned, will interest themselves in the matter and will try to help in gaining redress of such legitimate grievances as the sweepers on strike may suffer from.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. To the secretary, Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee. A.I.C.C. File No. L-8/1935, p. 41, N.M.M.L.
2. The municipal sweepers of Broach had demanded better conditions of work and higher wages and, dissatisfied with the arbitration award, had gone on strike.

5. To the Secretary, Bombay P.C.C.¹

May 6, 1936

Dear Comrade,

I have noticed in some newspapers, with alarm, that some proposal has been made for a special reception to me being given at Victoria Terminus, involving the uncoupling of the railway carriage in which I might be travelling. While I appreciate the kindly thought underlying this proposal, I would beg of you not to waste your time, money and energy over this uncoupling business. What it exactly means I do not know. But inevitably it sounds melodramatic and I dislike melodrama.

I have already informed you that I shall reach Bombay by the Mail on the 15th morning.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-38/1936, p. 343, N.M.M.L.

6. Homage to M. A. Ansari¹

India sorrows again for a dear and great son of hers.² That is our unhappy fate; but though we become used to sorrow and tragedy the pang is no less keen, the bitter pain of it remains. Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari has passed away and the nation of which he was a shining ornament and our national movement of which he was so long a strong pillar and a guide feel desolate and shaken. We remember afresh his brilliant gifts and his service to the nation and his sacrifices for the cause of freedom. And large numbers of us think with anguish of a loving and warm-hearted friend who never failed us and who is no more. It was 31 years ago, almost to a day, that I met him first³ and during these long years of travail and common suffering I may not say what his friendship has meant to me.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 10 May 1936. *The Leader*, 12 May 1936.

2. Ansari died on 10 May 1936.

3. Jawaharlal first met Ansari in London in May 1905. Ansari was then a house-surgeon in a hospital.

News reaches me already of meetings and hartals spontaneously organized for today as the sad news spreads. But it is fitting that we honour the memory of our loved leader and great-hearted comrade on a special day all over this vast land of ours. I fix Sunday next, May 17, for this observance and I trust that meetings will be held on that day all over India to express our grief and sorrow at his passing and to convey our respectful sympathy to the lady who has been his partner in life and who now has to face this greatest of sorrows.

7. On the Strike of Steamer Workers¹

Comrade Sibnath Banerji² has come to me and pressed me to go to Calcutta to meet the workers on the steamer services who have been on strike for so long. He has told me of the modest demands of these strikers and of how they have been rejected and every effort to come to an arrangement has been repulsed by the employers. I greatly regret that it is not possible for me to visit the strikers now without upsetting many important engagements. I know that I could not help them much by going to them but still I should have liked to be with them for a while to show my sympathy with them in their distress and my solidarity with them in their moderate demands. I trust that they will forgive me for not coming.

This strike is almost a typical one which shows the nature of the system under which workers have to labour. Their conditions of work are hard and the recompense they get is the least possible. And when they ask for more and press for more they are asked to sign slave bonds and are dismissed and starved out by the wealthy and powerful company which has drawn its wealth from their labours. Many years ago at the Karachi session the National Congress laid down that transport service on land and river should be nationalized. That demand gathers force when we see powerful private interests owning these vital services, exploiting their employees for their own private advantage. The solution of this problem is the solution that the Congress proposed at

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 12 May 1936. *The Leader*, 16 May 1936.
2. One of the Meerut Conspiracy Case prisoners; founder-member of the Congress Socialist Party; later a prominent member of the Hind Mazdoor Sabha; at present a Sarvodaya worker.

Karachi. But today we cannot enforce that solution, and the workers have to carry on their fight for betterment under the most adverse conditions and against powerful vested interests. They will suffer greatly and often lose but I have no doubt that ultimately their cause will win.

It is 90 days today since the strike started. For three months the strikers have suffered great distress and the mere fact that they have held out so long is a measure of their resentment at the conditions under which they have had to work. I send them my sympathy though I know that it does not mean much and hope that they will not be disheartened by temporary failures. The cause they struggle for is bound up with the larger cause of all the workers in India and elsewhere. If they remember this they will take heart.

8. Appeal for an Anti-imperialist United Front¹

I have come to this city after five years. Whenever I pay a visit to Bombay I feel happy, because Bombay has played a very important role in the country's struggle for independence. It has stood out as a separate entity from the whole country and carved out a special place for itself. I consider that Bombay, in a way, represents India. It has its capitalists, its rich people, and side by side it has its workers, its unemployed—the exploited thousands. Paying a visit to Bombay one can have a fair idea about India and its conditions.

I thank you for the reception accorded to me in the morning and at this meeting and I am overjoyed at the enthusiasm evinced by the people. But even in the joy and happiness there is the undercurrent of sorrow at the sudden death of one of India's greatest patriots and leaders, Dr. M. A. Ansari.

During the last one and a half months, since the Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress, I have been addressing meetings at several places, big and small, and giving expression to my views on the situation in the country. The Lucknow session of the Congress was full of conflicts, each side trying to pull its own way. It was at Lucknow that I placed my views. I think that it is necessary and essential that work should be carried on after having a clear conception of things, especially when it is a question of carrying on a big movement. It is

1. Bombay, 15 May 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 16 May 1936.

the duty of the Congress workers to see that one does not deceive the other. That is the reason why I, though elected President of the Indian National Congress, told the people of my way of thinking. I told them towards what I am inclined so that all Congressmen may know my views on several questions that are facing the country. It is no use being petty when the issues before us are very big. If one is to be petty or small-minded and wants to keep back something from one's colleagues, good progress cannot be expected.

The small and petty fights that are being carried on, forgetting the major and bigger issues that are facing the country, and such other things dishearten me several times. Having definite views on different issues and discussing them is a sign of healthiness. Such discussions are necessary. It would help the Congress workers and other members to know the situation and the different views on the subject. It would be really a good thing if the workers take up their work after having a clear conception of what they are going to do. The Congress wants lakhs and lakhs of Indians to be prepared thoroughly to carry on the struggle for independence when such an occasion arises. It is really unfortunate that many people are feeling disheartened at the new situation that has arisen in the country. But I think it provides an opportunity to the workers to think and consider the whole question from both sides and come to a decision. Once a decision is arrived at, it is easy to carry on the work. The Congress fight for independence is such that, at the very outset, the leaders of the movement are clapped into jails and it falls to the lot of the workers and followers to carry on the struggle outside; and that can be done only if they know exactly what it is.

At the Lucknow session of the Congress, I placed my views on the situation in the country. One of the main questions that was discussed at the Congress was the attitude of the Congress towards the Government of India Act. There was also the question regarding entering the legislatures. These are questions on which workers are entitled to have their views. A few months ago, while in England, some people asked me as to what Indians would do with the Government of India Act. I replied that the Congress would do exactly what was proper and necessary. I told them: "You ask us to cooperate with you. How can you ask for cooperation while you are carrying on repression?" The first and foremost duty of every Indian is to break himself away from the shackles that are binding him. The primary question is the achievement of independence for the country. Amidst minor things that are surrounding the people, many of them forget the major issue.

Every incident that happens in one or the other corner of the world has its effect on every other part. If one wants to understand a certain

portion of the picture, it will be better understood if he sees and studies the whole picture. Hence it is essential that one should know the international situation as India is part of the world. It is also necessary to discuss and find out as to what are the causes for the particular conditions that are existing in India. The hundred and fifty years of British rule in India form only a fraction of the thousands of years' history. One should consider the relations now existing between India and England and why they are so. Abyssinia has been annexed by Italy.² Is there any difference between Abyssinia and India? They may look separate but both of them are parts of the same picture. Imperialism was started in India by England and other countries followed it up and imitated England. Hence it is essential for the people to closely follow and study the international situation.

A few years ago the Congress decided on achieving complete independence because that is the only and the right course to follow. As to when we will reach our goal depends on the strength and forces that are at the command of the Congress. One is bound to wonder, after looking at things, "Where are we drifting?" I have heard that some merchants in this city are dissatisfied and are agitated over my presidential address, possibly because they think that what I preach will harm them. I do not know what exactly is the complaint and what are the speeches that were delivered, but I will be in Bombay for some days more and I would like to understand things better and then I may have something to say about it. They are possibly afraid of what I preached because they have looked at it from a different angle of vision. The main issue is to remove the existing poverty in the country. How can that be done? A solution cannot be arrived at by covering one knot with another. The solution lies in untying the knot. But one should not be afraid of untying the knot. In the process as far as possible no harm should be done to anyone. The untying of the knot would mean benefit not only to the people of India but to the whole world. The question is of untying the knot and not whether somebody will be harmed in the process. That is altogether a separate question. It would be proper if the vested interests themselves consider the whole question with a view to arrive at a solution. But if they want to perpetuate the present poverty in the country and want the present system of exploitation to continue, then the socialist solution is bound to come.

This is my solution of the problem. But I am prepared to consider any alternative, if anyone suggests, by which the problem can be solved. In the event of my being convinced that that method is practical I will

2. Ethiopia was annexed by Italy on 5 May 1936.

certainly join in the consummation of that solution. Upheavals are bound to come. As it is not possible to stop earthquakes, so it is not possible to stop upheavals. Old clothes will not fit when a child grows up. If he has to be clothed, then it should be by stitching new clothes. The old clothes cannot be forced on the child as he will either tear them off or they will not fit him. In the same way the present structure of society is such that the old order of things cannot and will not fit in, and it is essential that something ought to be done soon. If the government in India had tried to mend matters, possibly things would have been better, but that was not done. It is for the people to solve the problem.

There is some truth in that I do not like landlords and princes. But the question is not whether one likes them or not, or whether they are good people or bad, but that the landlords and princes do not fit in anywhere in the present order of things. It is not a question of individual likes or dislikes. The question is how to solve the present problem. Even if some persons try to apply a brake to the inevitable progress towards major change, progress will never be stopped. The forces will be such that they will break the brakes and proceed further.

In the event of a war, the only thing that India can do is to declare that she will have nothing to do with such a war.

After a few days Congressmen will come before you asking you to cast your votes for them. Besides Congressmen, many others also will be coming. The Congress programme will be placed before the country very soon, but I do not know what it may contain. But I am sure of one thing that Congressmen will be entering the legislatures to make the constitution unworkable. The communal parties or other parties will ask for the votes of the people in their individual capacity and not as representatives of the poorer classes or the unemployed, the workers or the peasants. If one were to see the demands that will be put up either by the Hindus or the Muslims one will find that there is nothing really beneficial demanded either for the Muslim or the Hindu poor. It will be a demand for a few more government jobs, etc. Or they will be getting into the legislatures for the benefit of those few at the top and not for the poorer classes. They do not contest the elections on any principle or ideology. But Congressmen will be asking for your votes on the Congress programme. They will never come before you as individuals. Their demands are not for their benefit, but for the common benefit. If you agree with the demands then you should vote for Congressmen.

Those who state that the Congress is getting weaker because of the differences of opinion are mistaken. This is not correct. One should

not be afraid of controversy and discussions. I think that it is necessary that all anti-imperialist forces in the country, though they might have differences, should join together and should put up a united front in the fight for Indian independence. Today the Congress is the biggest anti-imperialist organisation, but it is essential to bring together all the anti-imperialist forces. That is why the Lucknow session of the Congress passed a resolution with a view to get into closer contact with the masses.³

It is essential to look at and study the Indian situation as compared to the international situation. There is today repression in India and suppression of civil liberties, the like of which has not been known since 1857.

As for the offer of cooperation and extension of the hand for shaking hands by high government officials, the Congress has no time for either shaking hands or holding talks. It is busily engaged in removing the burden that is on India. The only way to get a response to the outstretched hands is to remove the disabilities which are preventing Congressmen from shaking hands.

On the question of office acceptance there are two views within the Congress. The Congress has decided to postpone the decision. But whether one is for acceptance or for non-acceptance of office, all Congressmen are united on the point of making the working of the constitution impossible. Of course, there are two views on the question as to how it should be given effect to.

Since the advent of Mahatma Gandhi into the Congress arena, there have been not many conflicts inside the Congress on questions of principle. Of course, there were differences of opinion, but the principles did not differ and the ideology was not different. But at the Lucknow session of the Congress one could see clear differences on questions of principle and ideology. When I saw that delegates and workers were closely following the discussions and were discussing among themselves the differences, I was glad because such understanding of differences would be for the good of the country and the thinking power of the workers would increase.

Some people say that the country is tired and is not prepared for any action. I suspect that these people are reflecting their own mind and not of the people. Satyagraha or civil disobedience movement cannot

3. The Lucknow Congress stressed the need of developing closer association between the masses and the Congress organisation "so that they may take a greater share in the shaping of Congress policy and in its activities, and the organization might become even more responsive to their needs and desires".

be started by just pressing a button somewhere and thinking that the whole thing would start off. The situation in the country and several other things have to be carefully considered before the country decides upon any action. It should not be forgotten that it concerns not a few people but crores. It will be the strength and force that is created by the crores that will lead the country to independence.

The issue before the Congress is not socialism though I referred to it in my presidential address. The issue before the Lucknow session was a political issue. The issue before the Congress is whether a radical mentality should be created in the country.

There was a conflict between the council-goers and others in 1924 and they returned back to the country after finding the futility of entering the legislatures. You should be careful in considering this question and giving your views.

Babu Subhas Chandra Bose was arrested immediately after his return from Europe. The anger over it is not against the government, but against ourselves as we are not able to do anything to prevent such things happening. Let all of us who took a vow to fight for complete independence six years ago, carry on the struggle for independence.

9. Interview to the Press¹

Question: What is the future of the zamindari and capitalist systems in India?

Jawaharlal Nehru: The zamindari and capitalist systems are bound to collapse. As to when that would happen, is a question of time.

Q: Will full compensation be paid for expropriation of private property?

JN: There can be mutual agreement between a socialist state and the capitalists and landed classes. They can be compensated to some extent though not in full. But there may be upheavals which cannot be checked by human power and the present social order is tending in that direction. Everything will have to be rearranged all over when the new order comes into being. Socialism is the embodiment of complete

1. Bombay, 15 May 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 16 May 1936.

Q: What do you think of the class war?

JN: When a socialist talks of it, he talks of something he does not desire to exist but which already exists in the present order of society in some form or other.

Q: Do you advocate industrialisation?

JN: I advocate industrialisation in its broad theory, but that does not mean that I agree with all that an individual industrialist does. Though industrialism has brought with it many evils, it would help the socialists to reach their goal.

Q: Is there the possibility of a split in the Congress on the issue of acceptance of office?

JN: The difference in view is based not so much on acceptance of office or non-acceptance. It is a difference in the fundamental outlook.

Q: Are we thinking of working the constitution or wrecking it?

JN: I am quite clear that the Congress should not work it, as it cannot work it.

Q: What would be your position if the Congress decides finally to accept office?

JN: It is a hypothetical question. I will act according to the circumstances.

Q: How will socialism be carried to the villages by the Congress?

JN: The Congress workers must base it on the present economic position of the villagers in terms of the economic situation in the country. It would be absurd to talk of socialism to a villager who is not in a position to understand what it means. He should be told in terms of the agrarian situation and that will ultimately lead to his understanding of socialism.

Q: What is meant by national genius?

JN: In the approach to a problem, the language used by the communists and the socialists is not understood by the people. They use certain historical phraseology lifted from European countries and hurl it down on the people here. One must go to the Indian labourer, know his needs and desires and put them in a way intelligible to him, conveying socialist ideals. In each country the movement develops separately, as in the case of Germany and Spain.

Q: Will the Congress revert to direct action in a particular province if a final decision is taken against office acceptance?

JN: The provinces are not going to act separately. All provinces will act jointly. The fact that Congressmen do not accept office does not mean that direct action, such as a no-tax campaign, will be launched. So far it has been stressed that parliamentary activity is one phase of the Congress programme. Now greater stress will be laid on the economic and agrarian questions.

Q: What is your reaction to the statement of a so-called Liberal from the Punjab opposing the suggestion of formation of a civil liberties union?²

JN: In Amritsar there are two organisations which have got good publicity through the columns of certain newspapers though their membership is little. But the Punjab Liberal organisation has nothing to do with the Liberal Party.

I do not see why people of entirely different persuasions should not come together to form the union. In England the Conservatives, the Liberals, the Labourites, the socialists and the communists were members of a similar union which came into existence two or three years ago when the British Sedition Bill was introduced in Parliament. Obviously it is not a union which may or can indulge in unconstitutional activities in the narrowest sense of the term. It will collect material and give it to the press. The mere fact that I invited Liberals for its formation shows that there is nothing in it which is opposed to their views. It will be merely a publicity body.

2. The statement was issued by the secretary of the Punjab Liberal League.

Q: A systematic campaign of vilification of the Congress in its handling of the Tilak Swaraj Fund is being carried on in certain newspapers. What do you say about it?

JN: This is not a new matter. It is as old as 15 years. Nearly a crore of rupees was collected in 1921. Two years later most detailed accounts were published and copies were sent to the press. No press could, however, publish those heavy volumes and three years later extracts from the accounts were sent to the press.

Out of the funds collected, nearly 30 to 40 per cent were paper collections. The funds were earmarked for various institutions and the money, though shown on paper, did not actually reach the Congress organisation. It was given to schools, the All India Spinners Association, anti-untouchability organisations and similar institutions in the country. A large sum went into the hands of the trustees in Bombay, part of which was confiscated by the government.

Twenty five per cent of the amount (nearly 13½ lakhs) came to the All India Congress Committee. The rest was distributed to provinces, districts and villages. If one could realise that the sum was distributed among thousands of organisations all over the country, one could understand how little was left in the charge of these organisations. In those days, the All India Congress Committee used to give grants to various institutions in the country.

It cannot be guaranteed that part of the funds was not wasted. Having experience of management of public funds, I am rather astonished how these organisations are able to carry on their activities with these amounts for years and years.

In England, during a short election period, millions of pounds are spent. Even a poor party like the British Labour Party spends nearly a million sterling on elections. On the other hand, during the civil disobedience movement in 1932-33 the United Provinces did not spend more than Rs. 63,000 during a period of 20 months.

You are familiar with the remarks made by Sir N.N. Sircar³ in the Legislative Assembly. I consider it a "low-down" on the part of a high official, to bandy about the fund, without taking care to ascertain facts. Sir N.N. Sircar collected large funds in 1921 to fight the Congress in Bengal but the accounts of those funds did not see the light of day.

3. Nripendra Nath Sircar; advocate-general of Bengal, 1929-34; Law Member, Government of India, 1934-39; delegate to the third Round Table Conference and member of the Joint Select Committee; died in 1945.

It is equally unfortunate that Sir N.N. Sircar should talk of "nationalisation of women", when the country is faced with major political problems.

Q: Do you think your *Autobiography* will be banned in India?

JN: The British press opinion is in such laudatory terms—even Conservative papers are praising it—that it will now be too late for the Government of India to ban the book.

10. Address to the Indian Progressive Group¹

I do not know on what subject I am to speak, especially when the Group has not definitely made up its mind on any subject. It is certainly a good desire to study and understand things, and I hope that it would lead to good results, though it might be very late in life.

Today big things are happening in the world and people have got accustomed to them and do not pay any particular attention to them, while thirty years ago very serious notice would have been taken if anything big had happened as is happening today. The period since 1914 has witnessed more revolutionary changes than any period before. Several world conferences were held to solve the problems facing the world, like the World Economic Conference, which was held a few years ago when experts from all countries met and tried to find a solution to the economic problems facing the world. Although all of them passionately desired to get at some conclusion, they could not succeed. Everyone talked of economic catastrophes and yet none could show a way to escape from them.

India is one of the major problems of the world. Looking at it from a long perspective, the historian of 100 years hence will write that the two great problems were India and China. These two problems are far more important than the present European problems. There are isolated problems all over the world, like the racial problem or the religious problem, the economic problem or the problem of any country in particular. But nothing can be made out or understood about any problem unless the whole set of problems and the background behind

1. Bombay, 15 May 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 16 May 1936.

them are studied. The rise of Hitler or Mussolini or Lenin were results of circumstances and I want you to try to understand the background and the resultant forces. But mere study without action is futile.

Question: What is the aim and object and the policy of the Congress?

Jawaharlal Nehru: The aim and object of the Congress is to win independence for India. It is economic and political freedom for Indians that the Congress wants. And it is the nationalist policy that the Congress is following.

While nationalism was a dominant force in Europe in the 19th century, it came to Asia at a much later stage. It has developed in a pronounced and aggressive way only during the twentieth century, rather since the Great War. Nobody liked to be sat upon by another. Nationalism was something more to the West. Due to economic urges countries in the past built up empires. The British Empire was built up that way. The English people came to India and India began to be exploited for Britain's benefit. Conditions became progressively worse and the urge for protest at first entered the upper middle classes, then the middle classes, and later the lower middle classes and slowly percolated to the masses, and that became the national movement.

Once economic and political freedom for India is won, there would be nothing to prevent the country from having closer connection with foreign countries. The Congress wants to achieve independence through peaceful and legitimate means but behind that lies the idea of power and sanction, not like the fascist power but through mass action in the most civilised way.

Q: Will you be satisfied if the problem of India is solved?

JN: Who, I? I will work for a socialist commonwealth of the world.

Q: What is the future of capitalism in India?

JN: The major problem in India today is the agrarian problem. It is purely the capitalist viewpoint that I am giving when I say that capitalism is bound to die. Even Mr. Montagu Norman² has declared that the problems created by capitalism baffled him. Capitalism, when it came, did a lot of good. But what was good some time back need not

2. (1871-1950); governor of the Bank of England, 1920-44.

necessarily be good now when circumstances have changed. Conditions in Europe today show that capitalism is not functioning. You should consider why it is not functioning and try to find ways and means to stop the rot.

Q: What is the solution?

JN: Socialism is the solution. But the choice is open to others to offer some other solution. Either we go back to the pre-capitalist era or break the shackles of capitalism and apply socialism as a remedy. Historically, I am convinced that socialism is bound to come.

Q: Will you please throw light on the civil liberties union which you propose to form?

JN: It is meant for the preservation of the civil liberties of the citizens. Such a question arises only when there is a conflict between the individual and the state. In England, France and America much importance is attached to the principle of civil liberties. Members of all the political parties should join the civil liberties union. Even though they may belong to opposite camps and may not personally like, even hate, the ideas preached by others, they should fight for the free expression of what others want to say.

You must be aware of the repressive measures like the Press Act, the detention of about 3,000 detenus in Bengal, the vigilance over the friends and relatives of the detenus, the Criminal Law Amendment Act and other provincial acts. You should study these conditions and measures prevalent in our country.

11. Socialism will Dissolve Communalism¹

Dr. Ansari's greatest contribution was in regard to the Hindu-Muslim question. We should sink our petty differences in the cause of the nation. We are fighting among ourselves for trivial causes and are overlooking bigger and more vital issues. We should study contemporary history

1. Address to Young Muslim Brotherhood, Bombay, 17 May 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 18 May 1936.

to understand what is happening in Palestine, Egypt, Sumatra, Java, Indo-China or Syria. The exploitation of the people in these countries differs only in degree, though in some countries the people are not as enslaved as we in India. But everywhere they are forming united fronts to win their freedom. The questions of seats in the legislatures and offices do not affect the masses of Hindus and Muslims whose interests are one and the same.

The big questions staring India as well as the world in the face are poverty and unemployment and these are common to both Hindus and Muslims.

The only remedy for these problems is a socialist order. The solution cannot be different whether it be in the case of Muslims or Hindus. India should find her own solution in the light of the world experience—of socialism. Substituting Indian capitalists in the place of British capitalists will not alter the lot of India.

A properly constituted and democratically elected constituent assembly alone can formulate the constitution of India. The Congress will not stop its fight till success is achieved and we shall not rest content till our goal is reached.

12. The Need for Congress Unity¹

Various problems are faced by us in the political arena. Attempts are being made and were made at Lucknow to create a split in the ranks of the Congress.

Party differences should be welcomed from a certain aspect. Differences arise out of free thought. Whether such thought is right or wrong, it denotes a sign of life. Stagnation of thought amounts to death.

Fascist countries like Germany and Italy have adopted ruthless measures to suppress thinking. It is well known that even such dictatorial power comes into existence out of a line of thought.

Under the circumstances, it is incumbent that we find a way out of the existing problems—economic depression, poverty, unemployment and

1. Speech at Bandra, Bombay, 18 May 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 19 May 1936.

starvation. Achievement of freedom alone can vouchsafe a solution which can only be through socialism, which is bound to come sooner or later.

The growing power of the hungry stomach cannot be checked by any existing government or power on earth, as is usually contended. The economic crisis is almost universal in nature. It is a world disease which can be treated scientifically only. It can never be treated by palliatives or by a mentality of reforms. The disease and its attendant evils should be rooted out.

The new constitution, which aims at a division of power, cannot succeed. No advance is possible with it. The machinery that exists is to rule the country but not for serving it as one would desire it to do. Right from the highest officer to the poorest *patel* the emblem of service is rule.

The Congress is not going to tolerate any sort of relation with British imperialism as that can never be a solution.

There are a few in the Congress who do not welcome socialism as a solution. But I am firm in my resolve towards attaining it. It is a law of nature that whenever a change occurs, it is inherent that a few or a small section is always dissatisfied and consequently suffers.

The question before us is to solve the problems of the masses but not of classes and socialism should be reviewed from that point of view.

In our fight, we may suffer, struggle or fall, but we should not be disheartened. I do not quail at seeing comrades fall in battle. But it certainly pains me to see that comrades turn out to be onlookers at the faintest vestige of repression. Differences we may have but in the struggle all should unite with the differences buried fathom deep.

We can as well quarrel for seats after the achievement of freedom. Now we should all unite for the struggle for freedom.

The war clouds hover on the horizon. The prospect of war is shaking imperialism and we should utilise this opportunity. Let us be united in the struggle of the Congress, despite the attempts of interested parties to rend us asunder.

13. On the Duty of Businessmen¹

Certain English newspapers have stated that I have greatly displeased the merchants by my socialist views. It is for them to say whether I have pleased them or displeased them. From the address you have presented to me this afternoon, I feel that you have given the right reply to those papers.² I hope that they will realise the feelings that the merchants have so clearly manifested this afternoon.

I am said to be a fighter who will create fights. I confess that the charge is largely true. Those who are slaves shall never rest content but go on resisting the environment so long as they remain slaves. If they do not do so, they will be as good as dead.

I want to make it clear that I am a socialist. Those who help in securing freedom for the country are its friends while those who do not take any part or join the opposite forces are its enemies, be they foreigners or our own countrymen. I am sure you will support the national movement.

Business can flourish only if there is purchasing power. Because of the lack of this, several factories closed down in America and as much as eighty per cent of her trade collapsed.³

No country would like to export its gold. America with its immense riches has hoarded gold and France, which is in a better position than America in the possession of gold, has prohibited the export of gold.

But India's case is different. In spite of opposition by the Assembly and leading businessmen in the country, gold is being exported⁴ and we are told that it is being done in the interest of India. The main reason of this policy of the government is that the British Government is badly in need of gold. Englishmen raised a hue and cry when it was said at the Round Table Conference that India would

1. Reply to the address of welcome presented by the bullion merchants and brokers of Bombay, 18 May 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 19 May 1936.
2. In their address of welcome, the merchants assured Jawaharlal of their full cooperation in whatever he did to improve the condition of the peasants and workers of India.
3. Owing to the depression of 1929-32, total industrial production fell by 48 per cent and as a result about 15 million workers lost jobs in the United States.
4. There was an unprecedented export of gold from India from October 1931, and from 1931 to 1937, 35.4 million ounces of gold valued at Rs. 298 crores were exported. This was 1/5 to 1/4 of the entire stock of gold accumulated since 1493.

not pay the loans borrowed in her name unless the position was thoroughly and minutely examined by an independent tribunal. England, however, in her own case, has refused to pay back the money she borrowed from America,⁵ and is not even paying interest on these at present. I hope that the bullion exchange will continue to be patriotic.

5. Great Britain and France, among other European nations, stopped payment in 1934 of debts incurred during the First World War to the United States.

14. Address to Women¹

I have received several complaints from women about a woman not being selected as member of the Congress Working Committee.

I am not pained to receive these complaints. On the contrary I am surprised that the complaints are so few. Women of India have not yet learnt enough to demand their rights boldly.

The personnel of the Congress Working Committee is selected by the President of the year. The responsibility of such a selection is on the shoulders of the President. But everyone should know by now what the situation was and what happened during the Lucknow session of the Congress. I made a radical speech and placed my views on different subjects in a forceful manner. But I cannot carry out many things that I preached. Several of the things that I advocated were not accepted.

Possibly a more self-respecting man in my position would have tendered his resignation from the office of the Congress President. But I thought that I should continue as President. I paid the price for my views and possibly will have to continue doing so. Hence the question of choosing the Working Committee personnel was not an easy job.²

If women have any complaint to make they should do so. They should not suppress it. Women should fight for their rights. Whether it is a complaint of women against men, or workers' complaint against capitalists, nothing will happen if they sit quiet. They should put up a fight for their rights.

1. Bombay, 18 May 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 19 May 1936.

2. This part of the report of his speech was contradicted by Jawaharlal in his letter to Mahatma Gandhi. See *post.* item 28.

Twenty years ago, the women of England carried on an intensive struggle and partly succeeded in getting their rights.³ It would be wrong to imagine that your rights will be given to you or that they will drop down from somewhere, if you simply sit at home. Whether inside or outside the Indian National Congress, Indian women should learn to fight for their rights. Merely putting up your demands will not do. You should organize yourselves. But let not the organisation be merely for holding tea parties, but for putting up a struggle for women's rights.

During the suffragist movement in England, many women entered jails in the cause of their movement. A girl entered the race course at Derby and tried to stop one of the race horses while it was running towards the winning post and in doing so she died.⁴ She knew she would die. Though it appeared to be a futile act, all England began to talk about it. People began seriously to consider the question of women's rights and their demands.

It was decided at Karachi that men and women should have equal rights. But mere writing or passing of resolutions is not having them. Men at the Karachi Congress silently consented to the resolution being passed because of the part played by women during the 1930 civil disobedience movement. During that period thousands of Indian women joined the struggle and played a glorious part. They created a wonderful impression. Many of them who silently voted for the Karachi resolution might not have meant what the resolution laid down. They might have had mental reservations. The question was bound to arise again.

Indian women should come forward and take part in the struggle. I want you to organise yourselves and increase your strength. There are still many in this country who are opposed to freedom being given to women. A pandit from Andhra once spoke about the Congress being responsible for bringing out Indian women from their homes. The Andhra pandit's complaint was that women ought not to be given the freedom which the Congress is trying to infuse in them. I warn you that in your struggle for your rights you will have to face many difficulties.

I would like women to complain whenever there is anything to complain about, whether it is against the Congress President or anybody else. But I warn you to be careful about those who show lip-sympathy while actually working against your cause.

3. The women's suffrage movement was started in 1903 in England. After the First World War women over 30 were granted the vote and in 1928 they got full suffrage.

4. Emily Davison killed herself by falling in front of the King's horse in 1913.

15. Address to the All India Trade Union Congress¹

There are several parts of the resolution, in one of which the Indian National Congress has been criticised.² It would not be proper for me, as the President of the Indian National Congress, to say anything about this part or that part in particular. Generally speaking, I am in full agreement with the resolution. The Government of India Act tightens the chain of bondage. Mr. Jhabvala's statement, that the Congress has not decided as to what should be its attitude towards the Act, is wrong. The Congress has decided its attitude and has condemned the Act in unequivocal terms. It is true that the Congress has not yet decided as to how it should be wrecked.

Some people are in favour of office acceptance although they want to make the working of the Act impossible. This attitude I view as dangerous. I think that even a little cooperation with the government at the outset may lead to a fuller cooperation. Hence it is essential that whatever is decided upon should be done after careful consideration of all dangers.

There are two parts in the Act, namely the all India federation and provincial autonomy. I have not heard of even a moderate of moderates saying a good word about the federation that is contemplated by the Act.

You are aware of the repression in the country; and if these are the conditions prevailing during times of peace, what will it be like otherwise? I think that nothing can be achieved by the acceptance of office by those who enter the legislatures with a view to carry out the struggle for independence. I once again emphasize that the form of government for the country should be decided only through a constituent assembly.

The communal question will never be solved by those who claim to be the leaders of different communities. The communal question can be decided only by the constituent assembly. The communal problem is there because of a handful of people in the different communities who want to agitate for their own benefit. The masses have no communal problem.

1. Bombay, 18 May 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 19 May 1936.

2. Jawaharlal was speaking on a resolution condemning the Government of India Act and criticising the Congress for postponing a decision on the question of office acceptance.

The Communal Award is absurd and useless. But it cannot be rejected till the fundamental problem of the country's political freedom is solved. I consider the Communal Award to be a dangerous thing which will check the progress of the fight for independence. But everyone should seriously engage himself in the major problem of achieving freedom for the country and then the communal question will automatically be solved.

You should carry on the propaganda and agitation against the Government of India Act and in favour of convening a constituent assembly, which alone can decide the form of government for the country.

16. Challenge to Critics of Socialism¹

Khaddar has benefited the people of the country to a considerable extent. We have derived as much benefit out of it as possible and should continue to do so. It is the duty of Congressmen to see that khadi is encouraged. But I want to say that in the ultimate solution of the nation's economic problem, the khadi movement has only a limited place.

This meeting is largely attended by businessmen who must have read my presidential address at Lucknow. I expressed my personal views and opinions in that address. India's greatest problem is that of securing political independence. For this purpose the Indian National Congress has been fighting for a number of years and with greater intensity during the last few years. In my presidential address, I pointed out that apart from this political problem, there were equally important problems facing the country, such as poverty and unemployment, and I also spoke on socialism. But no resolution was brought before the Lucknow Congress regarding socialism and no decision was taken on that issue.

My idea is to educate Indians and spread in them the ideas of socialism and what it stands for. Some time later, the question may be discussed in the Congress, and the attitude of the people of India on this question may be ascertained. This issue cannot be forced on the Congress, as is obvious to everyone, by using the lathi or some such method.

1. Bombay, 18 May 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 19 May 1936.

For this reason, I will educate all sections and classes of people without distinction and tell them through propaganda that socialism will be the ultimate solution of all problems.

The vice-president of the Indian Merchants' Chamber in this city commented on the presidential address and a scare was raised and it was even stated that the merchants in the country would have hereafter nothing to do with the Congress.² I could have replied to him immediately, but I waited till I came to Bombay. I ascertained the view of all sections of the people in the city, whether they agreed with Mr. Shroff in what he said and whether they were really dissatisfied with the Indian National Congress or with me. I found that Mr. Shroff's views were shared by only a handful of persons. I am glad that the people expressed their approval of what I said and what little I could do for the cause of national freedom and socialism.

But the views expressed by Mr. Shroff and the people of his way of thinking have special significance which require to be investigated.

What is the attitude of Mr. Shroff towards the national problems of India? Does he approve of the present imperialist system and the present policy of the government?

There are people in this country who joined hands with the government while the nation was engaged in the fight for freedom. At that time the rest of the world was watching them. What was the help given to the people in the crises by these people? If they did not help the Congress, they could have at least remained neutral, without trying to deal a blow at the Congress. They did not take their due share in the national struggle and how can they expect to be listened to as to what their views are?

Today anyone can see for himself the repression all over the country though there is no civil disobedience movement. Only a few days ago Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose was interned. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan is in prison. A regime resembling martial law is the lot of Bengal and the repression continues in the North West Frontier Province.

The press is suppressed, and innumerable number of organisations are still under the ban. Why do these people not say a word against repression which has become a normal feature of the present administration in the country? The Rowlatt Act appears to be more liberal in the face of the repressive laws now operating. You may remember the agitation carried on against the Act in 1919 when Gandhiji, from

2. On 28 April 1936, A.D. Shroff had blamed Jawaharlal for creating class hatred and said that such preaching of the abolition of private property and rapid industrialisation was self-contradictory.

his sick bed in Ahmedabad, sent an ultimatum to the Viceroy that unless the Act was withdrawn, he would start the civil disobedience movement. In that fight against the Act the Liberals too joined. Today conditions are far worse and it is surprising that people should raise a hue and cry that the Congress is going leftist. I would ask them what they are doing in the present situation.

The alarm raised in the name of socialism is a mere veil behind which they are holding aloof from the national struggle. I will try to convert the people to my views through the press, propaganda and pamphlets. If a large number of people, if a majority in the country can be converted, then there will certainly be socialism in the country. If those who oppose me are prepared, let them come out and discuss the issue with me. Let them approach the country and place their views before the people for their choice. If the country accepts the creed of socialism, it will be only after a study and careful weighing of the pros and cons of the whole question.

Everyone is aware of the two wings in the Congress representing two schools of thought. They discuss and criticise each other's views and approach the people at large for their opinion.

But what are those people of the way of thinking of Mr. Shroff doing? Behind the veil of the bogey of socialism, they try to placate the Congress on the one hand and the government on the other. But when had they been with the Congress? I am open to conviction on this point and if they feel that they cannot convince me, they may try to convince anyone of those supporting my views.

I want to put to them a straight question. Do they want political freedom for India?

If they really desire that India should have independence, then that can be the basis on which those people and the Congress can come to an understanding and can unite, apart from the issue of socialism. The first duty of every Indian is to secure political freedom for India.

The Congress represents all people and all views in the country. It can be said to be an all parties conference in permanent session. There are differences and conflicts as there would be in such a big organisation. But all Congressmen are united on the one issue of national independence. There may be difference of opinion on other issues. But once it is settled that there is unanimity on the political question, it is the duty of everyone to strengthen the Congress and not seek to weaken it by adding to the differences.

If that is the position, I wonder how the issue of socialism can arise.

I want to remind you that the Indian National Congress has been putting up a great struggle for the last 15 years for national freedom.

It was the Congress that for the first time focussed the attention of the world on India which was till then an obscure country. India was till then regarded by other nations of the world as the country of slaves. If Indians went abroad, they had to hang their heads, with a feeling of shame, at the treatment meted out to them by every foreign country.

But it was the Indian National Congress which brought prestige to the nation and showed the world that the Indians were a race that deserved respect at the hands of the foreigner.

No one can say when political freedom will be attained in India. The Congress has fought for freedom and fought bravely. If anyone thinks that the Congress moves in a wrong direction, one can point out the mistake and criticise the Congress.

But when lakhs of people, nearly 3 lakhs of them, are put in prison, any people of any other country would sink all differences and stand together. When there is such an upheaval, they will not sit at home, entering vain and feeble protest, especially when their people are ranged against a powerful government.

And what have those people done at the time of such a national crisis?

I would put three questions to Mr. Shroff and I expect an answer for them. On the issue of socialism, I am prepared to discuss with Mr. Shroff.

Apart from that, Mr. Shroff should clearly state:

What is his view regarding the fight of the Congress for national independence? What is his view regarding the present system of the government? And, what is he going to do when the country will be in the throes of a political movement like the past civil disobedience movements?

I have many friends among zamindars and capitalists and Englishmen. But because a zamindar is my close friend, my views on the zamindari system do not change. Because an Englishman is my friend, it does not mean that I should support British imperialism.

The question should be considered on principles. The broad issues are the impoverishment of the people and unemployment. In Bombay there are millionaires but the whole of India is not Bombay. If you go into the villages, you will find pathetic starvation among peasants and the labourers. They are slowly being crushed under poverty and misery. Even businessmen will realise how business is on the downgrade.

The flight of gold from India at a time when more prosperous countries like France and America have prohibited the export of gold, ought to show them in whose interest the administration in India is run,

in whose interest is the currency being managed. The Ottawa Pact³ is another instance of the interests of India being sacrificed to those of Britain.

In these conditions, what have these people done, who raise a scare when one contemplates a new order of society?

There is a possibility of another war and people should decide for themselves as to what they should do, especially businessmen interested in gigantic loans floated on such occasions.

3. India entered into a trade pact with Britain at Ottawa on 20 August 1932 granting imperial preference into India for British imports, whose margin of preference over other country's products varied from 7½% to 10%. The concessions offered to Indian goods and raw materials were negligible and inconsequential.

17. Reply to Shroff's Rejoinder¹

The people of Bombay have heard me or heard about me through the newspapers so much during the last four days that they must be feeling tired of seeing or hearing me. In the evening newspapers Mr. Shroff has replied to my last evening's speech. I did not have enough time to go through fully what he stated, but from what I read, I feel it is necessary to refer to it.

A few days ago Mr. Shroff made a speech criticising my presidential address at the Lucknow Congress. I replied to Mr. Shroff at a mammoth meeting on Monday. Mr. Shroff again came out with a statement.² I feel happy at the controversy as it places before the people both viewpoints. There are big issues facing the country, but the biggest problem that has to be tackled immediately is the question of Indian independence. How can the country be free? It is this question that has to be solved first. The struggle for Indian independence has been going on for years and will continue further. Bombay has played a very prominent part in this struggle. Many thousands take

1. Speech at Chowpatty, Bombay, 19 May 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 20 May 1936.
2. Shroff had reiterated his view that socialism was not applicable to India and said that Jawaharlal's claim that only the Congress was fighting for the freedom of the country revealed "intolerance" towards other parties.

part in the movement and the merchants of the city help the movement a great deal.

The problem of attaining independence is there, but there is another problem that is staring us in the face and that is the problem of poverty which is becoming acute day by day. There is the kisan problem in my own province. There is the problem of the workers in Bombay who have to face the attacks on their standard of living. There is the problem of the petty merchants and the unemployed. It is for the people seriously to consider how these problems can be solved, how can the hungry people be fed.

It is evident that so long as India is under foreign domination none of these problems can be solved. Still it is essential to consider how the question of Indian poverty can be tackled; and I think that it can be done only through socialism. It is necessary to think about and discuss socialism. It is with this end in view that I referred to socialism in my speech at Lucknow. I believe in socialism as the only way that can solve India's problems and hope that some day the Congress will become socialist.

But it is essential for everyone to remember that socialism is not the immediate issue and that there is no socialism in any one of the resolutions that were passed at Lucknow. They were all political. Reference to socialism is found largely in my presidential address. Socialism cannot be forced upon a nation. Socialism will come only when the majority of the people want it. And when socialism comes, none can stop its advent. But it is necessary that the people of the country discuss and know what socialism is, whether it is good or bad. That is the reason why I discussed it in my presidential speech.

As to the criticism of Mr. Shroff, everyone has a right to oppose or criticise a view held by another. By such opposition people understand both sides of the question. But I should be allowed to have my own view. I will accept and follow the verdict of the people and of nobody else. It is for the people to say whether they want this or that. Only a constituent assembly can decide upon the form of government for the country and nobody else.

If Mr. Shroff accepts this, if he believes in democratic principles, then both he and I have a right to stress our respective points of view before the people. There is a possibility of my getting into jail for advocating socialism, but there is no such fear as far as Mr. Shroff is concerned.

From the statement Mr. Shroff has issued, I feel that either Mr. Shroff has misunderstood what I said on Monday evening or I was misreported in the papers. What I asked Mr. Shroff was, as to what

was his position in relation to the struggle for Indian independence. It is not enough if he merely says that he is also for independence for India. I feel that those who are opposing socialism are doing so because they want to cover up their opposition towards the movement for Indian independence. It is a known fact that the Congress and other leaders have not accepted socialism. It is not proper to cover up one's real attitude by criticising or opposing socialism.

Mr. Shroff referred to the help which merchants of Bombay gave to the Congress. I know it. I am sure of their help. They have helped the Congress and will continue doing so. I myself have received addresses and purses for Congress work from abroad and from the Merchants' Association in the city during the last few days and why should I go and ask them whether they will help?

When lakhs and lakhs of men and women were engaged in the struggle for Indian independence, courted jail and sacrificed a great deal, what were the critics doing? They were siding with the government. I am not perturbed over the criticism of Mr. Shroff. He can continue criticising till he is tired. But when the people were sent to jail and made to suffer great hardships during the civil disobedience movement, these critics had no hesitation in siding with the government. And yet, they say that they are for the independence of India. This way everyone can say that he stands for India's independence.

During the fight for independence each man has to choose one side. He is either with those who are fighting for the country's freedom or not. There is no middle course. A handful of big millowners and others are trying to drag India towards fascism with the help of the government in the country. There is no difference between British imperialism and Indian fascism. During the civil disobedience movement the representatives of these men in the Legislative Assembly not only supported the government in its repression but advised stronger measures. Not that those who courted and entered jails expected these people to use their influence and to secure their release or lessen their hardships, but the fact remains that they are on the side of the government which practises repression.

It is a known fact that during those days the Congress had declared a boycott of British goods, and specially British cloth, and many thousands of Congressmen courted jail on that issue. Knowing fully well that there was the boycott movement in the country and being fully aware that that meant thousands were voluntarily suffering for that cause, a few millowners from this very city entered into an agreement with Lancashire. They never gave even a few seconds to think as to what would be the outcome of their action.

I am not opposed to freedom of speech. But I wish that similar freedom is allowed to me by others. I am for open discussion of the differences. I am against discussions being carried on behind the scenes. Socialism is bound to come, but it will come only when the people of the country are prepared for it. No power can stop it. Mr. Shroff has stated that I started the controversy. This is not correct. I expressed my views. Nowhere was any resolution of a socialist nature introduced in the Congress because it was thought necessary that the people should understand it before anything definite in that line was done.

Since I came back from Europe I have been working for Congress cooperation with all the other parties who are anti-imperialist in outlook. The parties must agree on carrying on the fight for complete independence for India. In this connection there seems to be a very great possibility of the Trade Union Congress and the Congress cooperating and putting up a united front. There is also the possibility of cooperation with the kisan sabhas. I am sure that the majority of merchants will cooperate with the Indian National Congress as they did in the past. The Congress is prepared to cooperate with anyone who is anti-imperialist. But how can it extend its hand of cooperation to those who are not prepared to move and those who want to stay where they are? The Congress will have to go ahead leaving the others behind.

The doors of the Congress are open for anyone to enter; but if one wants to speak through the window, then also the Congress will respond. Those who complain that the doors of the Congress are shut against them, want those who are at present inside, that is, the majority composed of the poor, to be turned out. I am against *purdah* for women but what can one do with men who want to be behind *purdah*?

At Lucknow there was nothing socialistic in any one of the resolutions passed. The cooperative mentality is growing, but I ask if we should retrace our steps after 17 years of intensive struggle or go ahead. It is for the people of the country to consider the question carefully and come to a decision. I am afraid that some friends are inclined towards cooperation. I think that such a mentality is dangerous as far as the independence movement is concerned. The noncooperation movement of 1921 was the outcome of the Rowlatt Act. But compared to the repression that is at present going on, the Rowlatt Act was a charter of freedom.

I appeal to the voters in the city to help and support the Congress candidates during the coming elections.

The Congress is the people. It is for the people to be alert and understand what is happening in the country and outside. The Congress is an organisation which consists of people who struggle for the country's freedom and carry on the fight after understanding the implications.

18. The Case for Socialism¹

I place my views on socialism before the country for consideration. In fact I have been doing so for the last ten years and I am glad that it has now engaged the attention of the merchants in Bombay.

The forces released in the post-war world are mighty and none can check their onrush. If I ask the onrush to stop, it will not; it is not in anyone's power to check the mighty forces, once they are released in the world.

We must realise that the solution to vital problems lies through socialism, whether one likes or dislikes it. If these problems are not solved, the world will be threatened with chaos. If obstacles are placed in the way of the solution, the progress may be slackened, but ultimately none can stop the problems getting solved.

This change, which is inevitable, should be brought about as peacefully as possible. Our leaders have stressed the importance of peaceful and nonviolent methods. Perhaps in history no other fight was carried on so peacefully and nonviolently as is being done in India. But when huge masses of people rise in an upheaval, who can say what will happen?

I am glad that the merchants are willing to discuss with me the issue of socialism. Some futile attempts have been made in post-war Europe to solve these vital problems. Even business is suffering and is gradually deteriorating because the purchasing power of the masses has dwindled.

All these questions should not be viewed from the angle of the profit motive. Large problems require bigger remedies.

But leaving this aside, you all know that the Indian National Congress has not adopted my views, but I hope that at a later date it will accept them when a majority of the people are in favour of socialism.

1. Reply to the address of welcome presented by six commercial organisations at Bombay, 19 May 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 20 May 1936.

Those who raise a false alarm, I would like to know how far they are prepared to join the national struggle. They want to find a pretext to strengthen the hands of the opponents of the Congress.

I have received a letter from a businessman of this city, expressing inability to join the civil liberties union. This is only a way of opposing the Congress at every step in its onward march.

19. Nationalism and the Class Struggle¹

I have so far addressed nearly fifty meetings and must have spoken to half a million people in the city. I am told that the audience tonight is mainly of the lower middle class and I have been asked as to what exactly should be its affiliations. For, after all, the scientific way of considering the conditions in the country is by studying the economic conditions of the people. In this condition of alien domination, all classes unite for national freedom, but behind it it is inevitable that there are also economic conflicts. In the national movement there is the psychological factor, but keeping it aside, the question should be viewed on scientific lines. Considering the relations between India and England, the whole of England can be said to be an upper class and the whole of India can be termed as a lower class. That is to say, England represents the capitalist class while the people of India are the proletariat. The problem of national freedom thus viewed in larger perspective becomes the problem of the exploited people. The rich people in India are also exploited to a certain extent, but the bulk of exploitation falls on the poorer classes. This is the scientific and fundamental analysis of nationalism in India.

Taking into consideration the psychological aspect, one finds that the struggle for freedom is common in countries under an alien domination. Behind this national struggle are classes and groups in conflict with one another. Today, though the urge for nationalism is strong, the upper classes are won over by the government. Fundamentally all classes are nationalist. But a small group, the upper fringe of the upper class, has become the supporter of imperialism and is more anxious to have British rule in India than the Britisher himself. These Indian groups

1. Speech at Matunga, Bombay, 19 May 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 20 May 1936.

express themselves in favour of nationalism, but their nationalism is something different.

Europe and the world tried to find stability in the post-war world but were unable to do so. Everywhere there were struggles and conflicts which ultimately led to upheavals. All these upheavals, in whatever part of the world they happened, were intimately inter-connected. And out of these a vital economic question arose.

On a scientific analysis of this situation, one finds that as big economic issues arise, certain class fissures which are already present in the society are accentuated. These divisions are more clearly demarcated in the Western countries. In India they remain covered by nationalism; but here too they are coming up. There is a conflict in the Congress on these issues, and people who never devoted their attention to these problems are now perplexed and worried. In India the situation is developing so rapidly that people are forced to find a solution to these problems. One must be clear in one's mind and language. As soon as one is clear and becomes logical, differences curiously hidden under the surface come up and they are accentuated.

One can find the topmost part of the upper classes developing fascist tendencies. The British Government is fascist enough. But certain elements do become fascist and in collaboration with the British want to retain their privileges.

One does not agitate on this issue, for agitators cannot effect changes if conditions are not ripe.

Today in India the peasantry and the working class are in a worse condition and are driven to thoughts of extreme action. But they cannot think clearly, and if a mass of people would think they would act. On one side would be the forces of fascism and on the other would be ranged the forces of social freedom, socialism.

Unless India finds a solution to these vital problems there cannot be social stability.

Up to now the upper classes support the national movement, but they possess certain privileges and are uncertain whether they will continue to enjoy them, and some of these classes are pulled over by the government to its side. The upper middle classes support the national movement with the hope that it will benefit them and that they will continue to enjoy what privileges they have.

The lower middle classes have no such difficulties. They are the backbone of the national movement today. Nearly 20 or 30 years ago, the Congress discarded the upper middle class leadership. During the last few years, the Congress message has been carried to the peasants and the villages by people from the lower middle classes. Of course, the

peasants too carry the message. They too back the national movement, but their backing is based on a vague thinking. The peasants are too poor and they look to the Congress for help. Thus the lower middle classes play an important role in the national movement and will continue to do so when the cleavages become more prominent.

The peasantry and workers, when the cleavage occurs, will be on the side of big changes, otherwise they will have to perish and go out of existence. Probably the upper middle classes will move more and more towards the British Government. Princes, big industrialists and landlords and communal leaders thus go over to the other side.

When the cleavage occurs, the line of division will throw the lower middle class on the side of the peasantry and the workers. They cannot possibly ally themselves with the handful of men on the other side. They will have to ally themselves with the masses. Individuals may fail or fall away. But the bulk of the lower middle class will march on as it has no hope under the present social system. Most of the leadership will come from the lower middle class, as it came during the last movement.

I have tried to put before you a scientific analysis of the whole situation and these problems cannot be solved in a vague way.

I would suggest to you to weigh these questions and issues arising out of socialism. I want an intelligent understanding of the issues and that people should think scientifically. When a big movement comes, many of you may fall. And in a big movement, there is the need for a strong rank and file, a strong second and third line leadership.

There cannot be ups and downs and social inequalities in this country. These must be got rid of. We have to build up a new social order in which everyone will have the fullest opportunity for development, no exploitation, and in which there will be not merely political democracy, but economic democracy, which means economic equality without which political democracy will be a hoax. What does it matter to one whether he has a vote or not, when he is hungry and starving?

Apart from the peasants and the workers, what is the condition of the lower middle classes at present in the country? There are a large number of educated young men, without employment, sinking physically and mentally, going to pieces. There is the instance of thousands of persons applying for two or three posts as policemen in Calcutta and among these thousands of men, there are many graduates. That is the tragedy of the middle class today. There is no use tinkering with the problem by appointing committees which do not take one anywhere. When the patient is mortally ill, what is the good of patting on his

back? These committees cannot do anything as they function within the framework of this social and economic order.

This order must be changed. When one thinks of the economic problem, one must also think of the unemployment problem, of the agrarian problem, and all these should be seen in a world perspective. Then one can understand the position.

It is most important that political freedom must be won. But it is equally important as to who should win this freedom. If political freedom means the control of the country by the same group which is now cooperating with the British Government, it would not mean any good to the masses. It must be the freedom of the masses, and the lower middle classes go with the masses. I hope that you will support the Indian National Congress and that you will think of the solution of these vital problems in a way which will benefit the vast masses in the country.

20. Socialism the Only Way¹

Brothers and Sisters,

There are great problems facing us. There is the question of independence. A great struggle has been going on in the country for years past, and in the course of it, thousands of our brothers and sisters have gone to jail and undergone hardships. That struggle for independence is still going on, and it will continue so long as success is not achieved, for it is the first step to our progress. Besides that, there are also other great problems—problems of our poverty, misery and unemployment. Unemployment has spread all over the country. It has spread in every section, among the peasants, workers, merchants, artisans and our youth. Unemployment and poverty have spread everywhere and they are on the increase. In order to get rid of these there is, in my opinion, only one remedy, and that is socialism. We should establish socialism in this country. Excepting this, I see no other way. This problem does not concern India alone. It concerns the whole world. There also many people

1. Speech delivered in Bombay on 19 May 1936 in Hindi for M.R. Masani's film "Pandit Jawaharlal's Message", which was not allowed by the government to be exhibited. The Hindi text is not available. The English translation printed here is in the Home Department (1936) Miscellaneous Series Files at the Tamil Nadu Archives.

are taking a stand in like manner and trying to introduce socialism. At present there are two groups of people in the world. On one side there are people who want to advance the world further and free the people from the chains of imperialism and capitalism. On the other side, there are a handful of people who are deriving benefit from the present state of affairs and are happy and well off and want to perpetuate the present state of things. There is a conflict going on between these two groups. The question is on which side our country, our people are going to stand. Out of these two groups I have no doubt that our country will side with that group which stands for independence and socialism. If there is any country in the world which stands most in need of this, that is, independence and socialism, it is our own poverty-stricken country where unemployment prevails. For this reason I entertain the hope that our countrymen will make the fullest effort to make our country independent and start a movement for the reorganisation of the society so that the country may be guided by the principles of socialism and side by side it may contribute to the efforts that are being made for the freedom of humanity. Our independence should be consistent with the independence of the world so that we may share in the struggle and success of humanity. Only then our country will become really independent and every human being will be able to become independent and make progress to the utmost of his capacity.

21. The Role of Big Business¹

I have survived easily the strenuous programme that I had to go through during my visit to the city. But the programme which exhausted me most was the one from which I have just come. I am referring to the tea party at the Taj with the members of "Big Business". As I sat watching those people discuss big matters and policies, I wondered if it was possible to bridge the gulf. There was an enormous difference in outlook between myself and "Big Business".

At the top are the feudal lords, the princes and the big landlords. They are interesting as a group to look at. But unfortunately they do not fit in with anything modern, whether politically, economically, or

1. Speech at a students' meeting in Bombay, 20 May 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 21 May 1936.

culturally. They never think in terms of the masses, but only in terms of their own interests. After them comes the big *bourgeoisie*. After the petty *bourgeoisie* entered the national struggle, which had been in the early days of the Congress carried on for the first time by the big *bourgeoisie*, the latter grew nervous and many of them dropped away though even now some of them are present in the Congress. But they are feeling out of place in the Congress.

Big movements like the civil disobedience movement show up the different groups in the country and as to where they stand. Whenever there is a crisis in the history of a nation the place of various groups and classes is shown up. "Big Business" during the civil disobedience was against the movement and sided with the government and asked for suppressive measures. They may not have done it as a group, but individuals did it. The middle class *bourgeoisie* largely supported the movement. Still the backbone of the movement is the lower middle class.

Since the last disobedience movement was stopped, it was found that there was a sudden going back. Immediately after the noncooperation movement started the Swaraj Party, and in the same way one found parliamentary mentality growing immediately after the civil disobedience movement. It was found that the reaction to the movement was such that there was a swing to the right. A left wing then developed to protest against the possible swing to the right. I am not saying anything in terms of something bigger and vaguer than the Congress.

There was another development in the economic phase. Ideas began to spread faster. Those ideas were vague and it was not known as to what those ideas would evolve into. The result was that there was a wide gap between the two groups. There was conflict in their ideologies and activities.

The national movement has come to the final stage after the second civil disobedience movement. Not that it could not be carried on for some years to come, but the struggle had to develop into something beyond the national stage. Due to the suffering of the peasantry, the educated unemployed, etc., new ideas came and a new plan was thought about. The starting of new ideas might partly have been due to success of the experiment in the Soviet Union and how they solved their problems. Conditions in the world are developing.

While the world depression was getting more and more acute, the Soviet Union, without any outside help, built up a tremendous structure which is unparalleled in the history of the world. Many of the methods adopted were undesirable; but that is not the main feature. The main feature is that they have achieved something great. They

solved the economic problem and banished unemployment, while the western European countries are struggling to bring order on their economic plane. Hence there is a swing in favour of the economic doctrine of Russia. Not that they have become socialists or communists. But seeing that while the rest of the world was groping in the dark Russia succeeded in solving the problem, many businessmen from America and western Europe visited the Soviet Union and studied their methods.

President Roosevelt, when he assumed office, said that creeping paralysis had come over the economic organisation and it was collapsing by inches.

In India circumstances have forced a new thought to be evolved. The only solution thought of for the economic conditions in the country is a large-scale organisation to tackle the peasant, the economic, the educational and other problems, if one wants to achieve anything at all. This cannot be possible unless there is political power. Hence the issue today is not the introduction of socialism. I cannot say when socialism will come to India. But that it will come, I am certain. It will come, not because I or half a dozen others want it to come. Nor will it stop because "Big Business" do not want it. Hence it is obvious that the people should concentrate for the present on attaining political freedom.

With that end in view it is essential that there should be an anti-imperialist front. At the very mention of these ideas the *bourgeoisie* becomes nervous. The "Big Business" people are very sensitive. They do not like to be reminded that they have not supported the fight for freedom. The big *bourgeoisie* cannot think in terms of the masses and look for support of the British Government. They will join hands with the government when the struggle starts again. The dominating national urge is so strong that the petty *bourgeoisie* has to join hands with those who advocate socialism.

Class struggle is therefore inherent in the present social order. It is there between the peasants and landlords and it is there in the factories. There is no use shutting one's eyes to what is actually happening in the country. One of the representatives of "Big Business" said in the Legislative Assembly that there should be no labour legislation for 20 years to come. They feel happy over it. They never think in terms of the workers and peasants. They always think in terms of their dividends. When there is a class struggle between the zamindar and the peasant, I feel that it is my duty to go and help the exploited. The primary problem is to attain political freedom, but one has to understand the economic background before he sets about his work. Unless one understands the background, one is apt to go wrong.

Whenever I refer to socialism you applaud. So I think that all of you believe that the ultimate solution of India's problems lies only in socialism. But I suggest you study it carefully.

Socialism is coming and will come whether "Big Business" want it or not. But I want my friends from "Big Business" to understand and carefully consider what is happening around us. They should not be blind to the fact that the economic structures in western Europe and America are coming down. The agrarian situation in the country today is just like, though not exactly, the agrarian situation just before the French revolution. No purpose will be served by saying that they will go slowly and solve the problem, while the problem is getting more and more acute. There is no use saying they will go slow when the economic situation is deteriorating.

22. Socialism—The Need of the Hour¹

During the six days that I have been in Bombay, I have addressed innumerable meetings and this is the last speech of this visit, though I may have occasion to come to Bombay many times in future.

You have shown your love and regard for the Indian National Congress of which I am the President, by offering me welcome and by attending the large meetings I addressed. I have placed before you my views on socialism and also discussed the question at the meetings. You listened to what I said. Now, what is the result of this? People attended the meetings in such large numbers because they realised that they had a sort of dissatisfaction within themselves, and perhaps their enthusiasm might have warmed up a little now. There will be an occasion for them again to show that they are prepared to strive for the independence of the country, though when that occasion will come none can tell at present.

Some people in Bombay might have felt dissatisfied with my utterances and might not have approved of them. I talked to the people of your city of Poona Swaraj and socialism and many people are in favour of these two things.

1. Speech at public meeting at Bombay, 20 May 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 21 May 1936.

The first and the most important issue before the country is complete independence. But along with it, equally vital issues arise out of poverty and sufferings of the people and how to eradicate them.

Some people ask me why I should raise the issue of socialism. They say it will accentuate differences and weaken the Congress.

I would ask them whether they have sufficiently considered whether my references to socialism will create any differences, whether they will strengthen or weaken the Congress.

If the Congress has grown stronger, it is because I raised the issue of socialism. Today the masses in the country have come nearer to the Congress and to that extent the position of the Congress has strengthened. I myself have derived strength for what little I do because I have seen the sufferings and poverty of the peasants and the workers.

For what purpose is Swaraj to be won? I want Swaraj to end the poverty and misery of the masses, for bettering their lot. Nothing else can be the meaning of Swaraj. Their misery has strengthened me in my fight for Swaraj.

The strength of the Congress is the strength of the masses behind it. Now they cannot be forgotten. Everyone has seen the picture of *Bharat Mata*. She is depicted as a beautiful woman. But *Bharat Mata* really represents the starving and hungry peasant. There are many millionaires in Bombay and there are palatial mansions in the city. But the grandeur of these buildings ought not to make one forget the tottering mud hovels of the rural areas. If they could imagine this picture then they could not have told me that I was trying to accentuate differences.

These people tell me that I want to expropriate private property. But they do not consider the plight of the country. There is great wealth on one side, extreme poverty on the other. The situation does not augur well for the country. It must be realised that a handful of persons will not be able to rule the country without the backing of the masses. They have grown rich because the masses had the purchasing power. If the purchasing power is taken away from the people, a handful of rich men cannot stand in the air. If the masses deteriorate, so will the position of the middle classes.

The rich and the upper classes may be able to hold on for a time. But in the midst of this deterioration, they too will be forced to consider these problems and find a solution for themselves.

It is clear that everyone wants Swaraj for without it no progress can be achieved. In the fight for independence cooperation of all the people is necessary. But side by side, the vital problems must also be

considered, for one must have a clear conception of the kind of Swaraj one wants. Is it for perpetuating the poverty of the people?

Many people have favoured socialism. Many again show their sympathy for socialism, but they do not seem to bestow the attention the question deserves. You should think over these questions. My own view is that socialism is the only solution. I do not want you to follow blindly whatever I have said. You must consider both sides of the question, after which you will be in a position to reach a conclusion.

This is the way of educating the people politically. For the ultimate decision will have to be taken by the people themselves. The question cannot be settled off-hand and there is ample time for you to consider it. The country must progress and people cannot stagnate. These questions, after they are considered by the country, will have to come up before the Congress for decision.

In the world everything is changing. Society is changing and the country is also changing. The people cannot afford to remain behind the times. Their problems cannot be isolated. In the flow of the sea, if a small quantity of water is isolated, it will stagnate and dry up. There is a change everywhere and India cannot hold aloof from the rest of the world.

Even the history of the Congress has changed during the last fifty years. Those who did not want to move with the Congress during these 50 years remained behind and made the curious claim that they alone were genuine Congressmen, having been connected with it from the beginning, while those in the Congress were not Congressmen. But they do not seem to realise that in a country where everything is changing they alone do not change.

The Indian National Congress is not a lifeless and decaying organisation. All vital questions are considered by the Congress because it is representative of the people's will. There are great leaders in the Congress. Prominent Congressmen constitute the Working Committee of the Congress. But this is not all the Congress. It is the organisation of the people in the country. It is not merely the institution of those who pay the membership fee of four annas. For in this country there are thousands of people who are not able to pay even this amount though they want to join the Congress. The Congress also derives its strength from these unfortunate people. And therefore the Congress must take decisions.

23. On the Bombay Visit¹

Bombay has been overwhelming in its kindness and in the enthusiasm it has shown for the cause of India's freedom as represented by the Congress. I addressed meetings not only of workers, but also of all shades and grades of Bombay's citizens. I have lost count of the scores of meetings I have addressed during these six days, each of which was attended by vast numbers of people. I imagine that out of Bombay's million and a half population about a third or fourth must have attended these meetings and gatherings.

Meetings may mean little or much, but these vast gatherings signify a deep stirring among the people of all classes, a questioning of vital issues and a desire to get a move on towards their solution. There was a wonderful unanimity on the question of Indian independence and there was also everywhere a sympathetic desire to learn more about socialism.

Some leaders of business have protested against my stress on socialism; but, in spite of this, nothing was more striking than the response of the mercantile community to the call of the Congress and national freedom. Over a score of merchants' associations did me the honour of presenting addresses and of assuring me that they stood shoulder to shoulder with us in our freedom struggle.

I go away with deep gratitude to the people of Bombay for their overwhelming kindness and with joy at the thought that this great city is destined to play as great a part as it did in the past in our freedom struggle.

1. Bombay, 20 May 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 21 May 1936.

24. On the Debate on Socialism¹

Discussions are going on in the city for the last four or five days on socialism as propounded by me. I would, however, gladly participate in such a discussion.

1. Speech at a merchants' meeting at Bombay, 20 May 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 21 May 1936.

Whatever the view of my critics may be, I personally believe that socialism is the only ultimate remedy for the country's poverty. However, both I and my critics have put before the bar of public opinion our views about the theories we hold. Now it is for the public to judge the merits of the case.

The merchants of the city who issued the manifesto are possibly disturbed by the expression of views I have given. These merchants have in my opinion evaded the major problem that faces the country today. The problem is how to drive away the stark poverty that stares the country. And the action of these few merchants, in these circumstances, amounts to a threat.

Would it not be proper to point out that there are only a handful of merchants worth millions whereas there are millions of people in this country who are almost starving? Is it not equally true that the peasants and workers and petty merchants are faced with the problem of how to maintain themselves? Would it not be pertinent to suggest, under these circumstances, that dissatisfaction will spread in these ranks?

In my opinion the mainstay of the country are these people. And I am one of those who think that if these people persist and if these people live, the country will live.

That is, in my opinion, the major problem and nothing else can cover up the present situation.

It would be perfectly logical to say that those who have assembled here or I myself cannot do anything to alter the present situation under the present circumstances. The attainment of Swaraj can find a solution.

Those who express any doubts on the working of socialism in this country should come out in the open and find a solution to the present situation.

The Indian Merchants' Chamber has several times helped the Congress and the national movement. I am quite aware of the fact that this body has helped the Congress in the struggle for freedom. But there are cases where some ex-presidents or eminent members of this body exploited nationalism in the name of *swadeshi*.

In violation of the resolution passed by the Indian Merchants' Chamber, one of the ex-presidents attended the third Round Table Conference and thereby acted against the wishes of the country.² Another equally distinguished member of the Chamber spoke in favour of ordinances in the Assembly, when the struggle for freedom was in full

2. Purshotamdas Thakurdas.

swing and when repression was at its height. A third, ostensibly preaching *swadeshi*, contracted a treaty with foreign textile centres with a view to safeguarding the interests of only a few merchants of this country.³

How would it be consistent for such people to preach ideas of *swadeshi* on the one hand and exploit nationalist instincts on the other? I appeal to you to continue supporting the Congress throughout its march for the freedom of the country.

3. H.P. Mody; see *Selected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 65.

25. Socialism and Religion¹

The twenty one gentlemen who signed the manifesto did not raise their voice against the ordinance raj when a resolution was moved at one of the meetings of the Indian Merchants' Chamber nor did they join hands with the Congress. And it is these people who now raise a hue and cry and criticise me for propagating my views on socialism. They are, however, welcome to criticise. It is for the people to judge which will best suit the country. I have no quarrel with any class or community. I have placed before the country a solution for its problems. If the Liberals or the "twenty one" can show the way, they can put it before the country. But instead, they are advancing ridiculous arguments against socialism. They have broadcast that religion is in danger. Religion has absolutely nothing to do with socialism, which is purely an economic doctrine.

I hope that the merchants will stand by the nation and its premier organisation, the Indian National Congress.

1. Speech at Bombay, 22 May 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 23 May 1936.

26. Interview to The Bombay Chronicle¹

Question: What is your reaction to the various press statements regarding your advocacy of socialism?

1. Bombay, 22 May 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 23 May 1936.

Jawaharlal Nehru: I am afraid that owing to very busy time in Bombay I have been unable to read fully the various statements that have appeared in the press regarding my advocacy of socialism. I should like to examine them in some detail, but I cannot do so at present during the few minutes at my disposal before I leave Bombay. I should like to make it clear, however, that I stand by every word of what I said in my presidential address at Lucknow. Criticisms of it are based largely on an astounding ignorance of socialism and communism. They are also based, so far as "Big Business" is concerned, in the city as elsewhere, on the intrinsic desire of the big vested interests to prevent any change, however beneficial it might be for the country, if it affects them. The Irish poet Yeats once said: "There is nothing so passionate as vested interests disguised as an intellectual conviction."

We have seen some of this passion and prejudice among the big captains of industry in Bombay, though an understanding of the problems is singularly lacking. Some signatories of the "twenty one" explained socialism to me in language which would have astonished any person who possessed a glimmering of economic knowledge. This manifesto itself shows where passion leads one to.

Q: What is your reaction to the bogey of "religion in danger" in the manifesto?

JN: They talk of religion being in danger. I did not know that the "twenty one" were the high priests or the arch exponents of religion in the city. To talk in this way is to display to the world that they have no valid argument to advance. There is no question of religion when we discuss economic doctrines. Religion should have the fullest freedom provided it does not take the form of vested interests and does not exploit others under this guise. The bringing in of religion in this manifesto shows once again how the vested interests have exploited it to their advantage.

Q: What is your comment on their argument that by advocating socialism you are endangering their personal safety?

JN: This argument is an equally surprising one. We are told that the personal safety of the "twenty one" is in danger. All the world knows that those whose personal safety is in danger in this country are the advocates of independence and socialism—not those who champion valiantly the cause of vested interest or British imperialism.

Q: What is the difference between your socialism and communism?

JN: Socialism and communism, so far as ideals and objectives are concerned, are identical or almost so. The difference comes in in regard to the various methods of approach to the problem. Both accept the general philosophy of Marxism in regard to the interpretation of history and current events.

Q: Do you accept this philosophy?

JN: I accept the general philosophy, though I do not accept every communist dogma in relation to it. I want to apply the philosophy in India and to understand what is happening here and to fit it in with the peculiar conditions and the historical outlook of the Indian people. I want to fit the methods to that outlook. I want to avoid violence. I should like to convert a great majority of Indian people by peaceful persuasion to this doctrine of socialism.

Q: Why do you say that the manifesto expresses the intolerance of the "twenty one"?

JN: The manifesto objects not only to the doctrines, as it has every right to do, but also to the propagation of ideas in regard to them. That is a very serious matter, for it infringes the most elementary rights of civil liberty. The coming of socialism will inevitably be a lengthy process and it will involve many factors including the education of people to that end. It cannot obviously come to India so long as the British Empire has possession of India. Therefore, our first problem is one of political freedom. After that the people of India will have to decide what form of economic and social organisation they desire in this country.

Q: What have you to say about the charge of intolerance against the Congress in the manifesto as well as Sir Chimanlal's statement?²

JN: I shall be happy to know in what this intolerance consists apart from our criticism of their political activities which we consider to have

2. Chimanlal Setalvad said on 21 May 1936 that Jawaharlal in his annoyance had abandoned all tolerance of difference of views and challenged the *bona fides* of his opponents.

been eminently injurious to the national cause. They have every right to criticise us as aggressively as they like. We stand for freedom on both sides to spread our ideas and to criticise.

But when some people actually go to the length of giving their support to the ordinances and otherwise side with British imperialism, when vast numbers of their countrymen are fighting a life and death struggle, it is a matter of far graver import. If it is a question of intolerance, I would like to ask if the manifesto shows tolerance when it talks of the suppression of certain views which it does not like and goes to the length of inviting the government to suppress them. It comes to this that, in the final analysis, these gentlemen stand with British imperialism and are opposed to even democratic freedom or civil liberty. Nothing could be clearer and more explicit than Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyar's statement on this issue. He has told us that in his opinion there has not been any progressive suppression of civil liberties in India and, so far as he is concerned, he stands shoulder to shoulder, as apparently the "twenty one" do, with British imperialism. The question thus is a much wider one than one of socialism which is not an immediate issue. It is one of our national political freedom itself.

Q: Don't you think that they criticise you because they differ with your methods?

JN: People may differ about methods, but if such differences mean the continuous support of British imperialism in and out of season, the inevitable inference from this would have to be drawn.

How far I am justified as Congress President in airing my views on socialism is a matter for my comrades of the Congress to consider; it is an impertinence for those, who are outside the Congress and oppose it, to talk about it.

I take my orders from the Congress and from no other authority.

27. The Fascist Mentality¹

I have no doubt at all about the support of the merchants and particularly of the Indian Merchants' Chamber. I know that those who

1. Talk with the representatives of the Indian Merchants' Chamber, Bombay, 22 May 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 23 May 1936.

issued the statement are mostly Liberals and are trying to attack the Congress in the guise of "Big Business".

The twenty one signatories to the manifesto are people who represent the fascist mentality in the country. When the socialist ideal becomes too strong, certain vested interests are bound to take to fascist methods. It is nothing new. It has been there in the West and it will be there in India too.

However, one can think of a socialistic order of society only after political freedom has been won. I am advocating socialism and want to make the people understand the doctrine now, so that when political power does come, it may not be captured by the fascists. Hence merchants can advocate socialism consistently with carrying on their business, as the socialist order contemplated is not an immediate one.

I assure you that individuals can continue having private property and consistently advocate socialism as they will not be giving away their possessions till the whole country is changed.

I am surprised at the protest of "Big Business". One can understand opposing, and vehemently opposing, one's views but it is really strange that they are trying to encroach upon my liberty of speech and liberty of thought. Not only do they want me to advocate their doctrines but they are mildly suggesting that I should be stopped from advocating my doctrines.

28. To Mahatma Gandhi¹

Allahabad
25th May, 1936

My dear Bapu,

...About women and the Working Committee I began by saying that I had received some protests for their non-inclusion.² I would have welcomed even stronger protests for I wanted our women to be more aggressive and to insist on their rights, both political and social. I

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, File No. II/36, National Archives of India. Extracts. The full text of the letter is not available.
2. Mahatma Gandhi, in his letter of 21 May 1936, had drawn Jawaharlal's attention to a report in *The Hindu* of his speech delivered at a women's meeting in Bombay on 18 May 1936. This report suggested that Jawaharlal had had to accept a Working Committee which was not to his liking. Also see *ante*, item 14.

invited them to organise themselves to press for their rights which they were not likely to get if they waited for the goodwill of their menfolk. About the Working Committee I said that it was formed under peculiar circumstances when I had to play an unusual part. A हयादार³ President would probably have resigned but I being बेहया⁴ stuck on even though the majority of the Congress had decided against me on some vital issues.⁵ This peculiar position was reflected in the formation of the Working Committee which certainly could not be under the circumstances of my choice although technically I was responsible for it. When various important viewpoints have to be represented, the lesser ones go to the wall. You are perfectly right in saying that I was responsible for the exclusion of women. But yet this is not the whole matter. I would have liked to have a woman in the Working Committee but as the matter developed and numbers of other names appeared and stayed, there was little choice left. Ultimately I felt that it mattered little to me who was in the Working Committee and who was not. The Committee as it took shape was not my child. I could hardly recognise it and to some inclusions, as you know, I reacted strongly.⁶ Yet ultimately I submitted but inevitably with the thought that I was surrendering to others and almost against my own better judgement. At the very first meeting, almost without provocations, the inherent conflicts appeared. The whole purpose of a President nominating a homogeneous Committee was thus frustrated.⁷

3. *Hayadar*—self-respecting.

4. *Behaya*—shameless.

5. Jawaharlal's proposal to permit the collective affiliation of trade unions and peasant leagues with the Congress was rejected; his attempt to associate the Congress more directly with the struggle for political reform in the princely states was also rejected and Mahatma Gandhi's policy of passive support was reiterated. The resolution on agrarian reform was toned down and, while condemning the 1935 Act, the party agreed to contest the elections and shelved the question of office acceptance.

6. There were very few in the Working Committee who were of Jawaharlal's way of thinking.

7. In his reply dated 29 May 1936, Mahatma Gandhi said: "Your explanation about the omission of a woman on the Working Committee does not give me satisfaction.... As to the other members too I have been under the impression that you chose the members because it was the right thing to do for the cause...."

29. To P. V. Gadgil¹

May 26, 1936

Dear Comrade,²

Your letter of the 23rd May. The National Congress as such can hardly become a completely socialist organisation. It is conceivable, of course, that it may give place to a socialist organisation or, becoming socialist itself, cease to be nationalist. What is much more likely is that it will continue to be influenced by both the urges—nationalist and socialist—the latter increasing in strength. I do not think anything in my address creates the difficulty which you have experienced.³ I think, as I stated, that it is perfectly possible for political independence to come to India without socialism but in the attainment of that political independence socialist ideology will play an ever-growing part. The political independence that comes in this way may soon be followed or might almost be accompanied by social freedom. But it is always a possibility that it may come by itself if internal and external events force the political pace. Such political freedom cannot be really suitable and lasting unless it solves the principal economic problem of the country; hence the inevitability of socialism.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Editor of the *Lokamanya*, a Marathi daily.

3. Gadgil had understood Jawaharlal to be planning to convert the Congress to socialism because he did not think India could attain independence without socialism.

30. The World-wide Struggle Against Imperialism¹

The country has suffered a great loss at the sad and sudden death of Dr. M.A. Ansari who was not only my dear and old friend but a great comrade in the fight for India's freedom. India's great sons are being snatched away, and Mother India is being deprived of their

1. Speech at Delhi, 28 May 1936. From *The Hindustan Times* 29 May 1936.

services at this critical juncture. Dr. Ansari suffered a great deal for the country. We must naturally feel dejected over his loss, but we are helpless before God and we should continue our struggle till the goal is achieved, as that will be the fittest memorial to the departed leader.

I recently visited Bombay where lakhs of people came to hear me in dozens of meetings and people belonging to all communities, castes and trades expressed their sympathy with the struggle for freedom. These huge meetings and great enthusiasm are due not to my personality but to the fact that there is a great upheaval going on in the hearts of the millions of India, who are equally groaning under the pain of unemployment, poverty and starvation. This is true of the educated, the tradesmen as well as the labourers and the peasants.

We have been fighting for the last many years with many ups and downs, and though we have not won so far, the time is sure to come when we will rise again and win at last. When our exploiters are once defeated, that would be their last defeat.

India is not the only country where the struggle for freedom is on, but Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Java, Indo-China and several other countries are putting up heroic fights for attaining independence. In other countries people do not talk of Dominion Status and things of that sort; it is only in India that some of our aged leaders continuously talk of Dominion Status and this is most painful to me. People of all other subject nations are fighting for freedom without any difference of caste, religion or political party spirit.

Imperialism is playing the same role in all subject countries, and the fight in India has no peculiarity in it. The problems of India are interrelated with world problems, though I am proud to say that no other country has put up such a hard and brave fight under such unfavourable circumstances.

The exploitation of India by the British has been followed by the exploitation of other nations by other European nations. The British finger-nails have pierced deep down into the hearts of the people of India and the fight of the Indian people is a much tougher fight than that of other countries.

Just as India's occupation gives a great name and status to the British, similarly India's freedom will be a great blow to British imperialism. I am sure that we have made a great progress in the struggle and there is no cause for grief. I am, however, sorry to know that for the last few years, after putting up a great fight, some of our people have deviated from the path and are immersed in trivial affairs, while the greater issue has been forgotten. I am sure that the 350 million people will, in the near future, succeed in their mission, but

what pains me most is not the oppression of the exploiters but the tactics of our own people, who are weakening the country's forces. None else but the Indian people themselves can weaken India's cause and that is the greatest disgrace. I appeal to the waverers and the weak not to weaken the independence front.

I have faith in socialism as the solution for the starvation, unemployment and poverty of India. I do not intend to force socialism on the people, but my idea is to give political education to the people and let them decide as to what is the best course for the country.

I am a socialist, as you all know, and I am keen on converting the Congress to socialism, but whether I succeed or fail in my object, I will always loyally work under the tri-coloured flag of the Indian National Congress since the Congress is the one most powerful organization that has been fighting, and can fight, for the freedom of the 350 million starving people of India.

Some people believe that socialism is even more important than Swaraj. But I think that independence must precede socialism, because unless we are politically free, we cannot carry out a socialist programme in India. I am perfectly willing to cooperate with any member of any organization that stands for complete independence.

You are aware of the Sapru Committee's report.² But the great problem of unemployment cannot be tackled by appointing committees. Unless the present political and economic system in the country is completely changed, there is no prospect of ending starvation.

Only a constituent assembly has the sole right to frame a popular constitution for India. The new Government of India Act is absurd and most reactionary. The new constitution means more chains for us.

The so-called Hindu-Muslim problem is not a genuine problem concerning the masses, but it is the creation of self-seekers, job-hunters and timid people, who believe in British rule in India till eternity. I wonder as to where is the Hindu-Muslim problem in reality. Whether Hindus or Muslims, poverty, unemployment and other hardships affect them alike; and therefore it is nothing but playing a fraud with the country continuously to harp on the so-called Hindu-Muslim problem.

The days of our exploiters, as such, are numbered and the British are a very wise people, and they know this fact. Therefore the British are anxious to make friends with some of the Congress leaders in whose

2. The U.P. Unemployment Committee, appointed by the government in October 1934, with Tej Bahadur Sapru as chairman, published its report in January 1936. The report recommended the reorganisation of education and the development of vocational education on modern lines.

hands they know the future destinies of India lie. The British are wiser than our timid brethren who grow nervous at seeing Britain's might and waver in the struggle for freedom.

Stand up, comrades, gird up your loins, take courage and look at the great problems before you. The Congress is the only organization that can lead you to success; march on under the tri-coloured flag till the goal is achieved.

31. On the Ideological Conflict¹

I am afraid you will feel disappointed if you want to hear from me something about your local matters. I do not want to lose myself in the problems which are not of vital importance to our country, for if we keep on considering these matters, the real important matters will be left out.

I want you to develop a clear perspective and to feel and know the real problems which face you. It is absurd to say that the Communal Award issue is the only main issue before the country.

The day India achieves independence, communal differences and jealousies will go of themselves and these problems will be solved.

You should differentiate between the two schools of thought in India. Some people think in terms of independence for India whereas others think in terms of keeping the present state of affairs intact. The communal problem exists because we are not able to settle the issue by ourselves.

At the Lucknow Congress, we witnessed a new conflict in ideology—an ideology which is present the world over. The question before us is whether we now want to go in for cooperation or continue non-cooperation to develop the revolutionary mentality with a view to bring about revolutionary changes. I judge the Communal Award and the Shahidganj questions from that point of view.

If you lie down on your belly and see an anthill in front of you, you will find it an unsurmountable hill, till you get up. These anthills are a nuisance and these should be removed.

The fundamental problems which face us today are poverty, extreme distress and tremendous unemployment. We should try to solve these

1. Speech at Lahore, 29 May 1936. From *The Tribune*, 30 May 1936.

problems. Committees cannot solve the problems, however good their reports may be, for they do not scratch the real issue.

We want the present rule to go from India not for the sake of prestige; we want it to go because it has failed to solve our real problems. When a government fails to solve these problems it weakens and fails and that is what is happening in India. I cannot say in how many years India will be able to have her own rule. But I think India will have Swaraj within 20 years.

I would like the political and economic structure to be changed. The attempts made at as many as 130 international conferences failed because everybody wanted to stick to the old order of things.

I do not like the paper constitution evolved by lawyers and I am opposed to it. The driving force of independence is great indeed, and to me it appears that everybody in India, whether belonging to the middle class or the poor class, is yearning for it. The only class which is opposed to it is the imperialist class.

You must have heard about the Bombay merchants' manifesto. These beknighted gentlemen only talk good of the Congress on two matters. The first is its advocacy of *swadeshi* because it fills their pockets with gold and the second is when they ask for stopping differential treatment between Indian and European merchants. These people have always opposed the independence movement and they will continue to do so. But a good comes out of their attempt to throw dust in the eyes of the people. The whole merchant community, who were almost in dormant condition, have been roused and they promise to support the Congress even though most of them are not socialists.

A stage has come in the political life of our country when it should be made clear to everybody as to where one stands.

The Liberals are a lot of estimable gentlemen, but sensitive friends. Those among them who belong to the top class are now attempting to line up with the knighted businessmen. They want the continuation of a system to which the country is opposed.

Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyar has criticised my proposal for the civil liberties union. I feel surprised how even a man of that intellectual understanding can say that there is no suppression of civil liberties.

I have been accused of going about preaching socialism among the common people thus endangering the peace of the state and the safety of the knights.

I want to know whether the people are to be kept in ignorance of the new thoughts and big issues of a country, and the fate of the masses is to be decided in the drawing-rooms of lawyers.

I have been accused of lowering the prestige of religion. I have openly declared and I want to repeat it again that religion in India as practised today is a scourge and a curse. I ask those "brave knights" since when they have fallen in love with religion and how much of it they practise.

They charge me with endangering their personal safety. Is it not I who have a real cause of grievance with regard to my own personal safety being put in danger always? But I assure "Big Business" that they need not fear me.

I want to say many things but I cannot. However, one thing that helps me to form a higher perspective is socialism. It has helped me to understand history, current and the future. I therefore commend it to you.

32. Unimportance of the Communal Award¹

I pay my tributes to the brave people of Amritsar where is situated the Jallianwala Bagh of undying memory. Outside the Punjab there is a feeling that the Punjab is much too engrossed in petty communal fights. I am a politician and all of you who have gathered here have come to hear from me about the political, social and economic position of the country. I want you to develop a clear perspective and to feel and know the real problems which face you, and not be side-tracked by issues which are but passing and unimportant.

The issue of the Communal Award, important as it is, is not the main issue before the country. The day on which India achieves her freedom, communal differences and jealousies will get solved of themselves.

There is an ideological conflict between the two sections of people in the country. While one thinks in terms of the continuation of the British domination, the other thinks in terms of independence. I would like you to think in terms of independence, which is the main issue before the country.

The problems of unemployment, poverty and starvation can be solved only through socialism. At the moment I do not want to create any rift or schism. The Communal Award affects only the higher classes. The poor masses are not benefited by its proposals. Their problems

1. Speech at Amritsar, 31 May 1936. *The Tribune*, 2 June 1936.

remain unsolved. If we solve the question of the masses, the question of each community will be solved by itself. I do not like the Communal Award, but I do not want to raise a hue and cry over it.

You have perhaps forgotten the sacrifices of this city, but in foreign countries they remember its sacrifices and its name has found its way into their dictionaries. I want you to tell the government that India will not be a party in any way to any war that may involve the British Empire at any moment.

I believe that the Congress is the only representative body which is fighting for India's freedom, and so I love it. I appeal to you to join the Congress in large numbers and feel your power.

33. The Inevitability of Socialism¹

Socialism is an economic doctrine for social organization of the state building which can alone bring salvation to the country. As far as rural debts are concerned the rural population is already crushed under the present economic system which has outgrown its utility.

Whether you wish it or not socialism is bound to come. It is apparent in the world's changing conditions. Conditions are changing every day. What of me alone, not a thousand like me can check the new growing thought. I believe socialism is the most effective weapon.

I want that traders and merchants should study and think about socialism and not be afraid without reason.

You are aware of the Bombay merchants' manifesto. These are men who are opposed to the Congress always, but as a reaction to their attitude 95 merchants openly declared support to the Congress. I would not take responsibility in case some people misrepresent socialism.

As for the communal problem, it is fundamentally wrong to consider matters on religious lines. It is but a question of jobbery for the upper class only.

1. Reply to traders' deputation, Lyallpur, 1 June 1936. From *The Tribune*, 2 June 1936. The deputationists said the propaganda of socialism among the villagers was dangerous for petty merchants and shopkeepers.

34. Businessmen and Socialism¹

Question: I would request you to remove the anxiety the business classes have begun to feel after your recent speeches.

Jawaharlal Nehru: The present world conditions are sure to have their effect on the Indian situation. Production there is and enough of it, and yet the people are dying of hunger. This apparently is the result of a certain economic policy and every thinking person has to consider these contradictions which we see everywhere in the world.

Socialism is the only solution of our present economic disparity and all our ills and I challenge anyone to point out to me any well thought-out plan to solve the world problem excepting socialism. However, so far as India is concerned, it is a matter of theory only and it will remain so till we achieve independence. Britain herself may be obliged to adapt herself to the new change, but as long as foreign domination continues in India we cannot do anything. I want you to cultivate the habit of thinking over the problems which face you not only as far as your business is concerned, but the problems which confront your country too.

Q: What is the use of spreading ideas that may prove harmful when there is no immediate possibility of Swaraj?

JN: Ideas are always more powerful than individuals. When conditions come to the help of ideas, nothing in the world can check them. In India itself the changing conditions are forcing the spread of new ideas and even if I try to stop the flow of this tide I shall fail. The more opposition you offer, the greater will be the disgust, discontent and anger against your present social and economic structure. So it is time now that both the vested interests and the masses learn the reality about it. True it is that certain vested interests will not go further, but then the new ideas are surely going to spread.

Q: Situated as we are, will it not be better to ask the government to help us in ameliorating the condition of the masses?

1. Interview to businessmen of Lahore, 1 June 1936. From *The Tribune*, 4 June 1936.

JN: I want you to let me know how you and the foreign government can do anything in this direction as long as the present economic structure lasts.

Under the present economic system the masses are not recognised even. They have no place even though it is they who buy. We have to increase their purchasing power and this the government will not be able to do even if it wishes to do.

If the government here attempts to ameliorate the condition of the masses it may have to remove itself from here, because the government has some other vested interests to please. The Ottawa Pact and the 18-d exchange ratio were the results of that one policy.

Q: So you think there is no other course excepting change of the present structure?

JN: Yes. There is the agrarian problem which is to be solved. I want you to absorb the unemployed in industries, in social services centres to teach the people to be clean and make them aware of the hygienic rules. But you must remember you cannot go on with anything unless you pronounce yourselves against vested interests. You must remove these before you can think of making any progress and the biggest vested interest in India today is British imperialism.

You cannot make an economic position stable, which is unstable from the very beginning, even with the help of the army and the police. So you have to change this present economic structure. The present government is failing, as it essentially must fail, being based on this structure. No matter who lives to see the complete disintegration of the present system, whatever may happen that structure is surely going to fail.

Q: How can you say there is no exploitation in a socialist state?

JN: In a socialist state trade becomes a state affair and the state is anxious to supply to the buyer what he wants without any profits. A socialist state becomes self-producing and self-sufficient, for which production is divided and allotted to different suitable areas; the produce is then exchanged for consumption. But as there never arises a question of profits so there is no exploitation.

Q: Is Russia not producing her goods to dump in the world market?

JN: No, Russia is not now producing to dump in the world market. It has sent its products to other countries as it is in need of buying machinery from other countries. It has not much gold to pay for the machinery and so it gives its goods in return.

Q: What do you expect the capitalist class to do?

JN: I expect the capitalist class to understand socialism, or at least the economic theory, and after having understood that I expect them to help in the change being brought about. Nobody expects of anyone to part with his property but if the capitalists help in the change it certainly will be peaceful. I would not mind even if the change takes a little more time in coming.

The capitalists should further take an interest in the country's affairs and forces which are now playing a powerful part in the struggle for independence. They should encourage industry and help in decreasing the increasing unemployment.

Q: The country's representative national organization—the Congress—has not accepted socialism. Will it not be, therefore, better to postpone the idea of setting up a socialist machinery, so as not to wean away the sympathies of the people who may otherwise like to remain with you?

JN: I repeat what I have often said and it is that we cannot have socialism in India until we have political power. A machinery has always to be set up beforehand and it cannot be postponed in this case too.

Supposing we do not set up any machinery and India achieves independence through the efforts of her sons and daughters, who is going to take up the power? What group will assume power to give the right lead to the country then? Will you suffer the danger of the Nizam taking up all power or the Narendra Mandal (Chamber of Princes) becoming the master of the country? The danger of small vested interests coming to the front is great and we must take all precautions against them.

Q: I would request you not to frighten away and tax the nerves of a class.

JN: I cannot help it. How can you check the spread of ideas? In the darkness that prevails around us in the world there is no way

excepting socialism and I can assure you that it will injure nobody but benefit all, excepting, of course, the vested interests who must now learn to help in a peaceful change.

Q: Why not tell the monied class to remain mere trustees of the wealth which they have? This is what Indian culture teaches us.

JN: No, this trusteeship theory does not hold good now. This is what the Pope at Rome even preached. We are not guided by movements but kicked about by them. I want to be the subject of history and utilize it for the benefit of my own country.

Q: After all, Indians spend money on charitable works also.

JN: I am sorry that in India people do not know how to spend their money even usefully. Generally—not in all cases—dharmasalas and other such places are built not with an idea of social service but for ensuring a fully paid up policy for entering heaven after death.

I want nobody to suffer. I always avoid hardships and the middle class need have no fear if they agree to move with the forces in the country and side with the new idea to ameliorate the condition of the masses.

35. The Congress and the Masses¹

Question: How do you visualise the happenings of the next ten years?

Jawaharlal Nehru: The whole economic structure will crash and there will be upheavals which no human power can avert, the capitalist system will go and along with it the British Empire, this is how I visualise the happenings of the next ten years.

Q: What is your estimate of the political situation in the Punjab?

1. Interview to the press, Lahore, 2 June 1936. From *The Tribune*, 3 June 1936.

JN: The Punjab has some political immaturity indeed but then the Punjab has a special feature and that is its youthfulness which is both good and bad. Another cause which, in my opinion, has its direct effect on the Punjab's political situation, is that the peasants here are living in a slightly better position so that there cannot be much impetus for a national agrarian movement like the one we have in the U.P.; and then that discontent which is so common among the peasantry elsewhere is not to be found in that terrible form in the Punjab even though it is now increasing.

Individuals do not matter much in big movements even though some may think that but for Lenin the Russian revolution might have failed. The Congress has unfortunately developed a mentality among the people of depending entirely on some leaders instead of depending on the power derived from the masses. It is rather bad that the Congress is now functioning through supreme committees and not through the masses. This has weakened the Congress. Leadership is required at the time of action only.

Q: What will you do if the Congress refuses to accept your ideas on socialism?

JN: Such questions will arise only when the Congress decides to refuse membership to socialists. Till such a position arises like everybody else I will remain in the Congress even though in a minority. Of course, the question of holding executive authority and responsibility will remain to be decided.

Q: Are you aware that the bitterness which is being caused by your new ideology and the differences which are becoming so apparent in the Congress will weaken the national organization?

JN: I am not afraid of a conflict. When there was a conflict last time the Congress stood to gain. The Liberals had been in charge of the whole affair. These men were absolutely isolated from the masses. They knew nothing about them. Their only worry was the upper middle class. The result was that when these Liberals left us, Gandhiji took up the reins and everybody knows that the 2 per cent loss which the Congress suffered by their going away was met by 78 per cent gain in the form of closer and intimate contact with the masses. I want the people to develop clear thinking and not in terms of individuals. The real power comes from the common people.

Q: Is it advisable to lose the sympathies of the people who have been connected with the national movement although the 78 per cent gain, which you have mentioned, is out of the 2 per cent who originated the organization? Are we not creating strife in our own camp?

JN: I am surprised to hear of the 2 per cent people with whom the national movement originated. These people always stood against the Congress movement itself. Liberals, as a group, cannot be expected to support the Congress cause, though some individuals among them may support the idea of independence.

The 2 per cent class has failed us always. Our country is an agricultural country and time may come and quite soon, of course, when the Congress will become essentially a peasant organization. Now are we going to continue making appeals to the barons of Bombay and do nothing which irritates them or shall we appeal to the masses who matter?

Q: How do you propose to bring in the 7 million Muslims to fall in line with you in the Congress?

JN: I will bring in Mussalmans by treating them as non-Muslims, i.e., approach them with the economic issue. My own honest feeling is that even though the Mussalman is rigid and finds it difficult to break through old barriers and the Hindu is flexible by temperament, when a Muslim is convinced of the new thought he will accept it. My appeal will be not to the top leaders but to the masses with whom the economic reality is bound to prevail.

I do not and cannot think of the people of India in terms of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh. I do not want and will not bribe any community to get its support; nor do I want anyone to join the Congress as Hindu, Muslim or Sikh. They have all to consider themselves as Indians.

Q: What is your opinion about the Hindu Mahasabha?

JN: I dislike the mentality of the Mahasabha of seeking favours from the government.

36. Parting Message to the Punjab¹

I regret very greatly that I have been unable to carry out the full programme laid down for me by the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee.² I endeavoured to do so, but the flesh was weak, and the end of the fourth day of intensive travelling, addressing monster gatherings, overwhelming and terrific processions and the swallowing of large quantities of dust, found me in a state which made it very difficult for me to continue this hectic life without inviting complete collapse. As my voice was almost gone for the time being the idea of addressing public gatherings was out of the question. And so after much hesitation and regret I had to take the inevitable decision to rest. I have a fairly strong constitution, which can stand heat and cold and hard work, but before dust and processions it weakens.

I should also like to mention that my own idea of an effective tour is not one which involves incessant travelling with brief halts. I would much rather go to fewer places and have more time to meet people. Personal contacts and discussions are more important than public displays and *darshans*.

I should like to express my deep gratitude to the people of the Punjab who have literally overwhelmed me with their kindness and affection whenever I have come to this province. I shall treasure this memory and it will hearten me. It will remind me of the fine spirit of great numbers of people here, of their enthusiasm for national independence, of their ever-widening horizon in regard to social and economic freedom. I am convinced that in struggles to come the people of the Punjab will play a brave part.

To my comrades of the Congress organization in the Punjab, on whom the burden of arranging my programme during this inclement season has fallen, I am deeply beholden. They have had to face a far harder task than mine and I have marvelled at their energy and enthusiasm which tried to overleap the bounds of human frailty. I trust that with this energy at its disposal the Congress organization in the Punjab will develop and spread out even further and will establish intimate contacts with the broad masses of the population and with all forces which work for Indian independence.

1. Statement to the press, Lahore, 2 June 1936. *The Tribune*, 3 June 1936.
2. He was to tour the Punjab for six days, from 29 May to 3 June 1936, but cancelled all engagements after 1 June 1936.

37. On the Punjab Tour¹

Question: Are the masses of the Punjab behind the Congress?

Jawaharlal Nehru: I am convinced, after my whirlwind tour of the Punjab, that the masses of the province are solidly behind the Congress and, given proper leadership, the Punjab can give a good account of itself.

Q: Has your Punjab tour changed the communal atmosphere of the Punjab?

JN: I cannot positively say that it has changed, but I certainly feel that there is a marked improvement. The Punjab is known for expression of outward enthusiasm and I am much impressed by the enthusiasm displayed by the people, in both the cities and the rural areas.

I am specially pleased to note that Mohammedans and Sikhs came to see me and hear my message in no less numbers than Hindus. My private talks with Mohammedan and Sikh groups in the Punjab have also given me the impression that all the sections of the province are eager to fight for freedom.

Q: Do the people of the Punjab like the doctrine being preached by you?

JN: The presence of 50,000 persons at the rural conference at Sarhali and large audiences at Lahore, Amritsar, Gujranwala, Lyallpur and other centres prove that the people of the Punjab are anxious to know the message of the Congress and how it can help them. These vast crowds came to see me not because of my personal attraction, but because they liked the doctrine that I am preaching and because of their love for the Indian National Congress which, they all know, is the only organization fighting for their salvation.

Q: Is it a fact that you have promised to solve the Shahidganj issue after a month?

1. Interview to *The Hindustan Times*, Delhi, 4 June 1936. From *The Hindustan Times*, 5 June 1936.

JN: No, I have made no such promise, but my solution of the Shahdganj and similar communal problems is to get rid of fanaticism. I am not going to settle this issue by sitting in a conference with Maulanas and Sikh leaders but my appeal will be directed to the masses, and I am sure the masses alone will solve such problems, the moment they get a true perspective of the currents and under-currents going on in the country.

I expressed my sincere congratulations to Dr. Satyapal and other Congressmen of the Punjab, who worked so strenuously to make my tour a success. I am exceedingly sorry not to have been able to complete my tour but it is the dust of the Punjab and the great zeal exhibited in processions that deprived me of the pleasure of visiting other parts of the province. Not only is my throat choked, but I am feeling acute pain in the chest. I will never forget the zeal and the dust of the Punjab.

The enthusiasm of the public showed that the people were under the influence of a cyclone. If the Punjab can keep up the enthusiasm that it showed during the last week and the leaders can put their heads together, I am sure the Punjab will regain its lost position in the political sphere of India.

38. Reply to Critics of Socialism¹

To newspapers and journalists my gratitude is infinite for their courtesy in giving publicity to what I say and write. Especially I am beholden to my critics who labour so hard to improve me by pointing out my innumerable failings and blemishes. I value that criticism more even than the praise of others. My regret is that a life full of many activities, of rushing about from place to place, of addressing vast gatherings and being tossed about by friendly and enthusiastic crowds, of debate and argument, of heavy office work and the facing of mountains of letters, of an hour stolen now and then to cut myself away for a while from the strife and turmoil of a mad world and to lose myself in a pleasing volume, leaves me little chance or time to keep pace with the abundant advice which friends as well as opponents generously shower upon me. But sometimes I dip into this well of

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 5 June 1936. *The Hindustan Times*, 9 June 1936.

advice and criticism and in spite of my innate modesty, a feeling of elation seizes me at the thought that even the casual words that fall from my lips move people so much, even though sometimes that movement may be one of wrath.

In this abundance of speaking and reporting perhaps I should not complain if errors are frequent and words are torn out of their context or imaginary utterances are fastened on to me, or my attempts at humour are not understood or are taken too seriously. Life is hard enough as it is; it would be a difficult burden to carry but for its lighter touches. It is bad enough that I should speak so often; it would be an utter weariness of the flesh if I had to correct every bit of misreporting or misinterpretation. And the questions that are put to me! Innumerable and of an infinite variety they are, from God and religion to marriage, morality, sex and those shadows of God on earth, vested interests and property. These questions seldom relate to my utterances or to the problems before the country. Indeed it is strange how my critics prefer to skip over what I say and to labour over other matters.

Yet the questions interest me and I would gladly deal with them if life was not so short and our days numbered. Unhappily we are so circumstanced that we spend our youth and our later years in the dreary atmosphere of politics, in getting excited over the Communal Award and the Shahidganj mosque and have no time to see life as it is or to face its real problem. For after all the real problem of life is one of human and social relationships, of the relation of man to man, of man to woman, of man to society. We cannot even see this problem whole much less can we tackle it, for our eyes are blinded and our limbs shackled by the political and economic structure that envelops us.

So for the present I may not lose myself in answering these many questions and I shall content myself by referring the questioner to my *Autobiography* wherein he will find my general reactions to men and things. And yet I cannot remain wholly silent when vague insinuations are made about my colleagues and I am quoted as an authority for these. I find references to continuous frictions between my colleagues and myself, of imminent disruption within the Congress and of other dire happenings. I find also some words of mine, which I used at a women's meeting in Bombay,² distorted to mean something that I never intended.

2. Jawaharlal was reported in *The Hindu* as having said on 18 May 1936 that although he was the Congress President he had no voice in the selection of the members of the Working Committee. Also see *ante*, item 14.

I believe I have been frank enough at Lucknow and later about the anomalous position which I occupy in the Congress executive. That curious and somewhat embarrassing position has, however, nothing to do with my socialistic faith. It was entirely a political difference which saw the light of day at Lucknow. None of us made secret of it for we felt that about vital matters we had all to be perfectly open and aboveboard and frank with the suffrages we seek and who will be ultimate arbiter of India's destiny. So we agreed to differ and differ openly, but having done so we also agreed to cooperate and pull together, not only because of the larger cause of India's independence, which we all had at heart, but also because our points of agreement were far more numerous than our points of disagreement.

There was, inevitably, a difference in outlook, a difference in stress on various things. All this was political, not socialistic, except in so far as socialism produced that difference in outlook and stress.

Nothing that could be called socialistic appeared in any of the resolutions at Lucknow. Even the socialists realized that the primary issue was political, that of independence, and on that they concentrated.

Having agreed to pull together, I must say that my colleagues have treated me and my vagaries with every consideration and I am deeply grateful to them. I realize fully, and I stated as much to my colleagues once, that I am a bit of a handful, always apt to jump and hop and often rushing in where wiser and more sedate people would bide their time. Still they bore with me and suffered my vagaries. To talk of splits and the like is an absurdity. There can be no division in our ranks when the call of independence comes to all of us and tingles the blood in our veins. We may agree or disagree, we may even part company sometimes but still we will march together to the tune of that call, and to all who hear it and respond to it we offer a warm welcome to our ranks, whatever their views might be.

About khadi again I have been reported as having passed disparaging remarks.³ I have stated often enough that I do not consider khadi as a final solution of our economic ills and, therefore, I seek elsewhere for that final solution. But still I believe that situated as we are today, khadi has a definite value, political, social and economic, and must, therefore, be encouraged.

But most of the questions relate to socialism and unhappily betray not only ignorance, but passion, which darkens the mind. Socialism is

3. Jawaharlal was reported by *The Hindu* to have expressed doubts on 18 May 1936 in Bombay as to whether hand-spinning and weaving were economic propositions.

an economic doctrine. It is a way of organizing the production and distribution and other activities of society. It is, according to its votaries, a solution of the ills from which society suffers today. And yet in considering this economic policy, we are continually having God and religion hurled at us, and Russia, like King Charles's head, is always cropping up. I am perfectly prepared to discuss the Almighty or the strange and mysterious ways in which He is worshipped and I am equally willing to talk of Russia, for Russia is a fascinating country today. But I do object to being side-tracked from the main issue. That can only be caused by confusion or a deliberate avoidance of the real question.

About religion I am quite convinced that there must be the most perfect freedom of faith and observance. People can worship God in any of the thousand ways they like. But I also claim that freedom not to worship God, if I so choose, and also I claim freedom to draw people away from what I consider superstition and unsocial practice. But when religion comes in the garb of vested interest and exploits people, it is not religion and it must be countered.

I believe in the basic economic theory which underlies the social structure of Russia. I think also that Russia has made the most remarkable progress, culturally, educationally and even spiritually, if I may use the word in its real sense.

But nevertheless I do not accept or approve of everything that has taken place in Russia and do not, therefore, propose to follow blindfolded the example of Russia. Therefore, I prefer to use the word socialism to communism because the latter has come to signify Soviet Russia.

Some captains of industry in Bombay take great exception to my use of the word socialism instead of communism, apparently thinking that thereby I seek to delude our people. They need not excite themselves over this matter. I am not afraid of the word communism. Constituted as I am, all my sympathies go to the underdog and to him who is persecuted most. That in itself would be sufficient to incline me towards communism when all the power of the state and of vested interest tries to crush it. Others move in a different way and naturally and gracefully incline to an alliance with power and the topdog. That power in India is British imperialism. But words and labels confuse.

What I seek is an elimination of the profit motive in society and its replacement by a spirit of social service, cooperation taking the place of competition, production for consumption instead of for profit. Because I hate violence and consider it an abomination, I cannot tolerate willingly our present system which is based on violence. I seek, therefore, a more enduring and peaceful system from which the roots of

violence have been removed, and where hatred shrivels up and yields place to nobler feelings. All this I call socialism.

How this will come to India I cannot say, what intermediate steps there will be, what crises to overcome. But I know this, that without some such effort we shall not solve our problems of poverty and unemployment. If there are other ways why do not my critics place them before the country instead of getting angry at something which they do not like or perhaps do not understand?

But before socialism comes, or can even be attempted, there must be the power to shape our destiny. There must be political independence. That remains the big and all-absorbing issue before us, and whether we believe in socialism or not, if we are serious about independence, we must join forces to wrest it from unwilling hands.

I believe in full democracy, political and economic. For the moment I work for political democracy but I hope that this will enlarge itself into social democracy also. The Congress has laid down the only possible democratic procedure for settling our problems—that of the constituent assembly. I cannot understand how any person who calls himself a democrat can object to this or see another way. But people who talk of unthinking millions of India, as the signatories of the Bombay manifesto of the 21 did, and object to vital problems being placed before them, probably would not like to be called democrats.

Do we stand for a democratic solution of our problems? That is a question I should like to ask my critics. If so then why all this shouting and trembling and wrathful utterances when I place those problems before our people and try to make them think of them? I have hardly mentioned socialism to them except incidentally, but I have laid stress on the amazing poverty of our people, the vast unemployment of our peasants and workers and middle classes, on the progressive deterioration of all classes except the handful at the top. That has been my sin in the eyes of that handful. But that is the only picture that comes before my eyes when I think of India. I cannot rid myself of it, try as I may. It is not a pleasant picture. I do not like it and, as I see it, sometimes my blood freezes within me, and sometimes it boils with indignation that such things should be.

39. On the Need for Trade Unions¹

I have come to enquire into the cotton mill strike.² I am unaware of all the facts that led to the strike but I will talk to the representatives of the strikers and hope that the other party will also put something before me. I think that the labour of our country is weak and the only way to strengthen it is by the formation of trade unions which can face the millowners to some extent.

In foreign countries labourers gain strength to get what they want while in India they get no opportunity to strengthen trade unions. The millowners create unions for workers but they are useless to them. The only way for labour is to go on strike for they cannot oppose the capitalists who are backed by the police and the army of the government. I felt sorry on hearing the court cases against the strikers but was not surprised. The labourers have a right to sell their labour which is their only strength. The other way is to organize unions. When these two things will be had labour can fight. By strikes not only the labourer suffers but the millowners' work also suffers. Whatever I could gather of your condition is very bad. The condition of Bombay is worse than Ahmedabad but Lucknow and Cawnpore are worse than Bombay. In excitement you put forward several useless grievances which should not be done.

I assure you that I would give all support and do whatever I can. I also feel that if Lucknow and Cawnpore unite you may achieve success.

1. Speech at the meeting of the strikers of R.G. Cotton Mills, Lucknow, 11 June 1936. From *The Leader*, 15 June 1936.

2. The workers of R. G. Cotton Mills, Lucknow, demanded recognition of their union and better living and working conditions. Jawaharlal's efforts at mediation ultimately failed.

40. The New Offensive¹

The New Offensive. But of course it is not new. We have long been aware of it. And yet it seems to be taking a new aspect and a more aggressive one. Forced to recognize that terrorism, of which so much has been made in recent years, does not exist any longer, the Sherlock Holmes and Watsons of the Bengal Government have searched diligently for fresh dangers hidden from the public eye. How else is the vast secret service system of the government to be kept employed? They have loyal service to their credit, they have received fulsome praise from Viceroys and Governors, they have families to support, are they to be asked to join the swelling ranks of the unemployed?

We are told by people who are in the know of the secrets of government that "there had been recently a marked tendency to abandon the terroristic policy of individual murder." It is comforting to know that the sleuth-hounds of government have discovered this tremendous secret. Ordinary men and women had come to this conclusion many years ago, but then they had no secret information. They could only judge from the obvious, and the obvious, as every detective knows, is often very misleading. But now the mystery men have given their verdict and we can sleep more securely in our beds. Terrorism is over, it has become the "former enemy". Its ghost is laid to rest.

But alas! we may not have peace or rest for if terrorism is dead another enemy has risen in its place. "The enemy today is communism." Red gold flows from Russia and labour unions, peasant associations, various *samitis*, *ashrams*, youth movements, etc., have all become the agents to spread this nefarious doctrine.

It is true that the individuals who spread this poison keep within the law. Their utterances are discreet, they talk of the distress among the peasantry, they discourage terrorism. But what of that? They are clever and at the back of their minds there are surely deep-laid plans to commit dastardly crimes.

1. Statement to the press, 15 June 1936. *The Tribune*, 17 June 1936. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 24-27. The publicity department of the Government of India had, in a pamphlet, asserted that communism was spreading in Bengal and that the authorities might have to take "special measures" to check it.

Therefore the time has come to meet this new menace. The many ordinances and other laws not being enough, special and additional measures should be enacted. We are told that "just as in the prolonged fight against terrorism it became necessary to introduce special legislation, so for the preservation of law and order and for the very existence of government, established authority may have to take special measures to stem the rising tide of communism in Bengal."

The fresh offensive has been prepared by a preliminary bombardment by the government publicity department. They have broadcast for public benefit what presumably are their views on communism. No one need be ignorant any longer of this intricate economic doctrine and philosophy of life. For we are told exactly what communism is: "Communism spells destruction, despair, death. Communism means the rooting out of all religion. Communism entails the complete elimination of culture. Communism robs the people of their land, their jewellery, their money and all their earthly possessions. Communism turns boys into thieves and murderers; it makes prostitutes of the nation's girlhood. The Great Moghul caused to be inscribed on a marble tablet in his Diwan-i-Khas: 'If there is a paradise on earth, it is here, it is here.' Of very truth it may be written of communism that 'if there be a hell on earth, it is here, it is here.'"

This bright specimen of thought and writing has been fathered by the publicity department of the Government of India and it gives us an insight into the minds of those who govern us and produce "special measures" and ordinances. Irresponsible and autocratic rulers have their own standards of behaviour which are not for others, and we are well used to their mental aberrations and their progressive deterioration in the face of a popular challenge to their authority. But what shall we say to this nauseating product of a diseased mentality? Have the Government of India discarded all standards of intellectual integrity? Is their mental apparatus going to pieces?

The question is of interest to the student of politics, sociology or pathology. But it is something more vital for us, for we have to live under this dispensation and anyone of us may be spirited away to the "paradise" of the Andamans, or otherwise subjected to pains and penalties.

We have been discussing the problem of civil liberties in India, and some, giving civil liberty a theoretical allegiance, have told us that we are partly responsible for its suppression. For if we behave why should the need of punishment arise? I should like to ask them, as well as the signatories of the Bombay manifesto of the 21, what their reactions are to this fresh move on the part of government.

We seem to be moving fairly rapidly to a state of affairs when our universities and text books of economics and history would serve little purpose. They might indeed do harm. The director of public information in India might well take their place and issue from time to time brief credos of the true doctrine which must be believed. Or, better still, he might have recourse to the radio and abolish the printing press.

41. To V. K. Krishna Menon¹

Mussoorie
June 18, 1936

My dear Krishna,

... You will no doubt get some faint idea of happenings here from the Indian press. But I should not be surprised if you get a confused notion. It is difficult enough to get a clear view on the subject. I am being attacked and criticised by a variety of people, big business, Liberals, Responsivists, some Congressmen and of course our beloved government. And yet behind all this lies the fact that wherever I go I get a prodigious welcome and the response is such that it puts out the critics. It is a tiring business to carry on wars on numerous fronts and there are few to help. But I carry on. The process is not without its exhilaration.

I shall go down from Mussoorie in another 5 days. After that it will be all rush and intensive activity,...

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

42. To Secretary, Lyallpur City Congress Committee¹

Mussoorie
June 21, 1936

Dear Friend,

I have just received your letter.² It was obviously impossible for me to issue a statement as suggested by you before the 21st.² It is a little difficult for me to keep pace with the many misrepresentations which are appearing in the press.

In regard to rural debts the principal fact to be recognised is that the burden has grown tremendous all over India and unless something is done to reduce this burden greatly both the creditors and the debtors will lose. That burden is beyond the capacity of the great majority of the people to carry. Many causes have contributed to the increase of this burden and a good number of these are utterly beyond the control of the agriculturists. For instance, the fall in agricultural prices and the government's currency policy. The present position therefore is that this problem has become an urgent problem which must be tackled for the benefit not only of agriculturists but of trade and industry as a whole, and even for the sake of creditors ultimately. If there is utter incapacity to pay obviously it is not possible to enforce payment.

This is an all-India problem. -I have not studied it with great care and specially I am ignorant of the special conditions of the Punjab. Therefore I am not in a position at present to suggest detailed remedies for it. But I take it that the Punjab problem of debt is fundamentally the same as that of the rest of India.

Under present circumstances it is absurd to say that all debts should remain as they are, because that is manifestly not possible. But the steps that should be taken to scale them down should be such as to cause the least injury to various groups. I imagine that what would be necessary would be a kind of a moratorium to relieve the tension immediately and to give time for a proper consideration of the question and a new adjustment. Debt redemption boards should be established with power to scale down debts and interest in view of: (1) fall in prices, (2) paying capacity.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. p. 17/1936, pp. 143-145, N.M.M.L.

2. The secretary, in his letter to Jawaharlal on 17 June 1936, requested him to issue a statement clarifying his views on "rural debts", since the deputation of the traders association which met Jawaharlal was interpreting his interview as wholesale repudiation of rural debts.

Special attention should be paid to relieving the burden on the poorest classes who are being crushed by it. If some such steps were taken the problem could be considered in its entirety and injustice and distress to any group would be largely avoided.

The whole problem is complicated by the fact that in the past and the present money lenders have played an important part in the credit system of the country. It is not desirable to upset the system completely without some further provision for cheap rural credit.

These remarks of mine are general. They should be applied to each province having special regard to the conditions prevailing there so as to enable us to make the new adjustment and to relieve the burden in the most desirable way possible.

You may make use of this statement in any way you like. I am sending a copy of this letter to the secretary of the Punjab P.C.C.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

43. Fundamental Problems¹

I invite your attention to the fundamental problems before the country like unemployment and poverty. It is time that you should rather think of these instead of indulging in petty problems such as the communal question which affects a handful of people and has nothing to do with the masses. Political freedom and brave tackling of the economic issues can settle these problems and inevitably political freedom takes the first place. But political freedom itself must be considered in terms of these problems and not as if it stands by itself in the air. Hence it becomes necessary to consider the economic ills of the country, the agrarian problems, the industrial problems, and others which have in conjunction with and with the help of foreign domination produced this terrible poverty and unemployment. Socialism has been much discussed in the country and some people have objected to it. I believe that the socialist way provides a remedy for

1. Speech at Dehra Dun, 23 June 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 25 June 1936.

these ills. But what I am most concerned with is a thorough discussion of these problems from every possible standpoint, both nationally and internationally.

We cannot ignore the international aspect as it is well known that international factors produce great depression and fall in prices and other crises. Let those who do not believe in socialism produce well thought-out schemes of solving these problems and we shall consider them and decide democratically what is the best for us all. This discussion is good and helps in educating the masses and making them feel that their troubles are essential parts of the national movement. It helps also in clarifying our own minds and gives us a truer perspective of what is happening and what we are aiming at.

I am glad that the Congress has undertaken to draw up an agrarian programme after full discussion with the people really affected by the present problems but we must always remember that the primary and essential job before us is to obtain political freedom and we must all join hands and forces to gain this.

It is certain that the Congress will take part in the elections. It will do so, I am sure, with success. It will not go to voters as a suppliant for votes for individuals on their supposed merits, but as the standard-bearer of India's flag of freedom asking all those who believe in independence to stand in its ranks and support it.

There are many odd groups rising all over the country, hoping to get into the new councils and perhaps to share in the spoils of office and patronage. Let us ask each and every one of them where they stand in regard to independence and anti-imperialism. Is there any doubt in anyone's mind that it is the Congress, and the Congress alone, which has effectively and gallantly fought for India's freedom and will continue to do so? Let us, therefore, not fritter away our energies and be confused by minor issues.

The big issue demands our allegiance. India's self-respect demands that we should stand by the Congress in this and other matters. It is the Congress that counts here as well as in foreign countries when India is considered but it must be remembered that the Congress is going to the new legislatures not to cooperate, not to get petty and superficial benefits out of them, but to fight the new Act and try to break it. We know that independence will not be won in the council chambers but in the broad fields and factories and market places of our great country. The real struggle lies outside but we can help it a little by our presence in the new legislatures, and therefore we have decided to go there.

44. To Satyapal¹

June 26, 1936

My dear Dr. Satyapal,

On return here I found two of your letters.

As for the statement from me about debts I have already sent you a copy of the letter sent to Lyallpur. This contains a statement on the subject.

You need not be afraid of socialists and others ridiculing or abusing the Congress when I am present.² My presence converts a conference into a Congress conference whatever its promoters might want to make it. It should be our endeavour to win all the advanced elements to our side instead of keeping them at arm's length. There is very good material in these people, especially in the Punjab.

I shall let you know the dates of my visit to the Punjab as soon as they are settled.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-38/1936, p. 191, N.M.M.L.
2. In his letters of 8 and 22 June, Satyapal had advised Jawaharlal to secure an assurance from the organisers of the socialist conference to be held at Ludhiana on 25 and 26 June that it would not run counter to the Congress.

45. The Need for Panchayati Rule¹

Mr. President and Brothers,

You have heard a few verses and poems. Now I wish to tell you something plain and direct without any verse or poem in it. It is after a very long interval that I have come to Sultanpur city and district. Many years have passed since I came here last. It may be that

1. Speech at Sultanpur 27 June 1936. Home (Political) File No. 4/15/36, National Archives of India. Translation from Hindi by police reporters.

very few of you present remember the time when I used to come here very often. Fifteen years have passed since then. Fifteen or sixteen years ago I had ample opportunities to come to Sultanpur. Not only to the city, but I also roamed in the rural areas of this district and met calamity-stricken poor peasants of this district. People tell me even now that this district is backward. The national leaders and national work seem to have halted and are not moving vigorously forward. Compared to other districts less work has been done here. When people tell me this, I am reminded of the time fifteen or sixteen years back when I used to come here and when such enthusiastic work was done in these so-called backward districts of Oudh—Sultanpur, Pratapgarh and Fyzabad—as perhaps nowhere else in the whole of India. Remember, there have been great struggles in our country during the last fifteen or sixteen years on the part of the people—between the people and the government here, between the Congress and the government. You know there has been a great struggle in the country for Swaraj and other things. This too you know that this struggle by the Congress and the people largely shook the powerful British Government. The time when I used to come here, the crisis of which I am talking, were much earlier than when the struggle of satyagraha or noncooperation was started in the whole country. It was not a great thing to take part in the struggle at that time for it was common to all districts. When I first came to Sultanpur there was some talk about noncooperation in the air, but very few persons had heard of it. The peasants had started a great movement here at that time. A mighty movement had been started in these three districts of Oudh, by which not only these districts, but the whole of our province was shaken, and in the end the government of the province made all sorts of promises in connection with the changing of laws regarding the peasants. Slight changes were actually effected in those laws. But when the time for making alterations came the government had already been making vigorous efforts for a year or two to crush this peasant movement. Thousands of peasants were sent to jail, harassed in their houses and suppressed. So when the time came for changing those laws, government saw that they had suppressed the peasants, and very few of the promises they had made were fulfilled. You know that when the local tenancy law was changed the peasants were very little benefited. I wish to remind you that several years have passed since the poor, weak and weaponless peasants of Sultanpur and other adjoining districts started a vigorous movement, a formidable struggle. And when I remember this I refuse to believe that these districts are the feeblest in Oudh and in our province and that the peasants of these

districts cannot achieve anything. Probably you yourselves can answer this by examining yourselves and your companions. Are the inhabitants of your city worthless? If you say so, then I too will be prepared to believe it. But I am not prepared to believe that the peasants of these districts are worthless, because I have seen them, attended their large meetings and witnessed their enthusiasm and vigour in huge processions. It is evident that it is not surprising if the peasants, being suppressed and oppressed from every side, are not able to continue a great struggle for a long time. But the power which roused these peasants to action in 1920 and 1921 is still there and that power is not solely confined to your district but is in the whole of our country and it is due to that power that there have been great movements in our country during the last fifteen or sixteen years, no matter whether they are called noncooperation, or satyagraha or peasant movements. Because of that power no one in this country will ever be able to rest until the peasant questions are solved, for you know that our country is after all a peasant country. It is not a country of individual *vakils* and *mukhtars* who, when they get some ordinary posts, try to imitate higher officers. Their country is not our country. Had it been so it would have been ruined by now. This is a peasant country and unless their questions are solved, unless their hardships are removed, there can be no peace in this country. Till that time it will be the duty of everyone always to make preparations in this country for a revolution because the peasant question is the question of Swaraj of our country. You hear "Swaraj, Swaraj". But what is Swaraj? You raise slogans of "Victory to Mother India"; what is this? Some persons hang pictures of Mother India in their houses, a beautiful woman standing very perplexed and weeping, and in great trouble. But what is India? Have you ever thought of this? A beautiful woman is not India. Naked peasants are India. They are neither handsome, nor good looking, for poverty is not a good thing, it is a bad thing. Therefore, when you cry "Victory to Mother India", remember what India is and that people in India are in the worst extremities, whether they are peasants, or workers or retail shopkeepers, and some of our youth too. Their condition is becoming worse every day. They get no work, nor any profession nor service. They suffer hardships. You will see that the condition of all communities of our country, except a handful of persons who belong to upper society, is gradually deteriorating. That question is necessarily one of peasants, but it is also of all communities, whether they are artisans or follow any other profession. This question is always before you. At times you hear of the Hindu-Muslim question and read in papers or see that people fight with lathis. But bear in mind

that the real question of our country has nothing to do with any religion or creed. If the peasants, or workers, or artisans, or shopkeepers fast and starve, they starve whether they are Hindus or Mussalmans. No such law is framed as may give food to a Mussalman peasant and not to a Hindu one or as may be advantageous to a Hindu merchant and injurious to a Mussalman merchant. Such a law cannot be, and is not, framed. The real question of our country has nothing to do with religious institutions. It is connected with the hunger, poverty and starvation of the people, and unless we remove these, each of these questions will face us. Therefore, you have to understand that this is your own concern, you have to think over how this question can be solved. Evidently, we cannot solve this question, if you and I sit idly doing nothing. You and I have to face a mighty government, have to face the British Government. You and I have also to face those people who are unfortunately our brothers, who are at all times bound to the tail of this government, who are always opposed and inimical to their country and betray it, siding with the government which suppresses us. But it is not difficult to win over such people, for they side with those who have power. If there were Swaraj today, they would be the first to come forward with flags in their hands. They would be the first to leave the present officers and side with the new ones. Neither you nor I care much for them. But our fight is with a brave government. Do not think that they are a weak people or that they will be frightened away by your uproar. When a powerful opposition has to be faced, you and I have to increase our strength. Strength has to be opposed with strength, courage met with courage. We have, therefore, to increase our strength. You know that we are all weaponless, we have no arms or anything of the kind. But remember that we have enough strength despite our being weaponless, and that strength is our capacity to achieve something by being organised. Our India, our country, is a big country. If the people of this country are of one opinion and organised and make up their minds to face this autocratic British Government, to bring about in the country all that they wish, the British Government, in spite of its military and police and of those who are tied behind it, cannot do anything. Obviously we will have to remove it. Efforts have been made for the last fifteen or sixteen years to produce this strength, to do our work, whatever that may be, in an organised way. We did smaller as well as greater work. We launched the noncooperation movement, we launched the satyagraha movement. We talked of a no-rent campaign. All these efforts of ours had had a very great effect upon our people, upon the British Government. We had an effect upon our people, in the

sense that we created courage in them, increased their strength, and those who were bowed down and could not keep their heads up began to walk fearlessly. Their dead hopes began to revive a little, that they could remove their hardships. The effect we had upon the British Government is known to everyone and we had an effect upon the world also.

The world came to know that Indians would not tolerate slavery, or at least that they would not tolerate it with their heads bowed even though there may still be slavery in India. In this way the prestige of the inhabitants of India increased. All these were the effects of the national movement.

It is true that we are not yet free. It is true that enough suppression and oppression are being practised upon us in our country. But this does not mean that we have not increased our strength sufficiently. It does not mean that we should bear this or should continue to suffer our bondage. Therefore the question before you and me is to increase our strength further and face it. Why face? That very question of Swaraj again comes up. But what is Swaraj? What does it denote? Do you think that Swaraj means the replacement of the present English officers by Indian officers? Do you think it would be Swaraj if all the high posts, including those of the Viceroy and the Governors, which are at present occupied by Englishmen, were given to Indians while your condition remained the same as it is today? You know that the peasants would be in no way benefited if their troubles regarding rent and ejectment continued. Is there not Indian rule in your district? As far as my information goes, all the present officials are Indians. The deputy commissioner, the superintendent of police, the tahsildar, the deputy collector and the peons are all Indians. But Swaraj has not been established in your district by their holding these posts. And if the same thing happens in other districts also and all the big posts—even that of the Governor—are given to Indians there would be no Swaraj. If the existing system of government continues it is immaterial whether an Englishman or an Indian assumes power. It would not be Swaraj and you and I should fight against it. It is of no consequence whether we have to fight against Englishmen or against Indians, for what we want is that the sufferings of the peasants and the masses should be removed. And in the achievement of this it becomes our duty to sweep aside with a broom whoever stands in our way—be he Indian or Englishman. Thus Swaraj means that the masses should assume authority, that power should not remain in the hands of officers but pass into those of the people, who may do what they like. How can power come into the hands of the masses and

what does this transfer of power mean? You know that under the present system of administration it is the big officials who pass orders. They fix your rent, and every order regarding rent or any other matter or law trickles down to you from them. The higher officials pass on the order to their immediate subordinates who in turn pass it on to their subordinates and in the end the *patwari* or constable comes to tell you that you have to obey the order or, if you defy it, to go to jail. If you do not like the law and want to agitate against it you should launch an agitation against it. Thus under the system of government which obtains today it is the big officials who exercise authority and the people have no hand in it. They have either to obey or rebel. But Swaraj is quite a different thing. The present system of government is the worst form of rule that could exist in any country. Swaraj on the other hand means a kind of *panchayati* rule under which the common people will elect their representatives and manage their own affairs, be they of your city of Sultanpur, or of Sultanpur district or of the province or even of the whole country. The big *panchayats* should have representatives elected by the people. Hindus and Muslims, men and women should jointly elect them. You can now realise what is the meaning of *panchayati* rule. You will be empowered to elect your representatives. As the peasants form the bulk of the country's population, the representatives of the peasants would be in the majority. The shopkeepers would elect their own representative and they would naturally select a person who had an intimate knowledge of their problems and also knew how their troubles could be removed. And if after the election he began to be too proud of his position, you would have the right to turn him out and send up another man. Thus he would have fear in his heart and do his work properly. If he did not work properly he would be replaced by another man. If such a *panchayati* rule were established in our country in any district you would realise the difference between things as they are now and would be then. All the laws regarding rent, debt, ejectment, etc., would be made by your elected representatives who would not exercise authority arbitrarily but would rather frame laws according to the wishes of the people. You can yourself realise how easily your troubles and grievances could then be removed. Bear in mind that if at present you launch any agitation, whether it be a kisan movement or any other, your sufferings cannot be mitigated so long as you do not take the reins of government into your own hands. If the crops have failed, if you have to suffer loss owing to the fall in prices, if you have grievances in connection with ejectments or illegal exactions like *nazrana*, you can carry on an agitation against these and form kisan sabhas. All this is very

good. But as long as you do not assume power, as long as the masses do not become the rulers of their country, you cannot get rid of your troubles. If the crops fail and you raise a dust you may perhaps get some remissions. But after six months if the crops fail again the same question will crop up, about remissions. Is your condition any better even when the crops are abundant? So this problem can be solved only when you establish a *panchayati* rule in your country under which the mass of the people including even the poorest classes wield power and a handful of officers cannot sit on high chairs and exercise authority as is the case today. Such a *panchayati* rule is called Swaraj. Swaraj does not mean anything else. Bear in mind that Swaraj does not mean that Indians should become high officials. We have become sick of Indian officers and especially of the subordinate officers. So the main question is that the masses should assume power. You know that nowadays every officer, be he a *patwari* or an ordinary police constable, considers himself to be no less than a Governor. As for the others, you know quite well what they think of themselves. Now suppose there were *panchayati* rule here. What would be the position of these officers then? They would then be appointed by your elected representatives irrespective of the fact that they may be even Governors today. There will be no place for Governors and the Viceroy in this country; they will remain at home. But some arrangement would have to be made to carry on the affairs of the country. So you will have to appoint some men as officers. Suppose your representatives elect such an officer, say, a police officer. What would be the difference between that officer and the police officers of today? Nowadays even the lowest officer considers himself to be a big official and you are afraid that he may arrest you and prosecute you under some law. The police officer of those days would always be afraid of being dismissed if he did anything which displeased the public. You can well realise how such an officer would work. He would always be out to please the public and would avoid displeasing them. Thus the policy of the officers would be changed and their duty would be to serve the public. If they failed in their duty they would be removed and others installed in their place. So the most important question before the country is that of Swaraj or a *panchayati* rule in which all the people of the country—whether they are Hindus, Muslims, or people of any other faith—will have equal rights and they will rule their country, with the help of those rights. I do not mean that all our troubles would immediately vanish with the establishment of *panchayati* rule, but what I want to say is that we shall be on the right path. We shall have power in our hands to remove our troubles and manage our affairs.

And the foremost question then would be to remove poverty and unemployment, which are rampant in the country. It would be our duty to remove the growing poverty and unemployment of the peasants and the youth.

These big problems are before you and it is for them that the Congress agitation and other movements are going on in our country. You find that these agitations sometimes halt or subside but they cannot be stopped permanently. These agitations and the struggle for freedom cannot cease, and that is because the power behind them is the country's hunger and suffering—it is the power of the starving multitude. It is possible that your influential leaders, whether they belong to the Congress or to any other institution, may retire owing to embarrassment or fear and they may join hands with the government. This is not an uncommon occurrence. You find everywhere that some people get tired after a time and retire behind the scenes or accept some post. But the retirement of these men, or of a handful of leaders, does not matter much. Nowhere do you find that the retirement or weakening of such men has had any effect on our struggle. It is possible that some effect might have been perceptible in a particular city or district for a short time but this does not matter much. The forces behind this struggle are not those of the influential leaders. Bear in mind that the biggest leader cannot carry on a struggle alone. Battles are fought with the help of big armies and the powers behind those armies. Fortunately there were and still are many big leaders in our country. Mahatma Gandhi is our greatest leader: you know how greatly the country has benefited under his guidance. But bear in mind also that although Mahatma Gandhi is a great leader and there are some others also, leaders cannot fight battles unless the country has strength, which is the outcome of the sufferings of the people, the hunger and starvation of the multitude. And it is these forces which give birth to big agitations and revolutions. The leaders can only foresee the policy. They recognise the forces and lead them along the right path. If the leaders do not give proper guidance the people go astray and lose strength. But whether they follow the right path or not, it is the people who have power, and therefore as long as their troubles are unheeded the country has to face this question and cannot ignore it. Someone—may be a well-to-do officer, a lawyer, a banker, a landlord or he may be occupying some other post—may tell us that Swaraj is a good thing. Even the English have now begun to say that Swaraj is a good thing. But they may say that it would be established by degrees and that this clamour and noise are futile. Swaraj, they say, will be achieved by degrees and this shouting is meaningless. The fact

is that if Swaraj was established by degrees they would not stand to lose because even at present they are well off. They have houses to live in and clothes to put on. All their needs are fulfilled. They can, therefore, wait some time for Swaraj. But if a hungry man asks for food and you tell him that food is a very good thing and that he will get it in good time if he waits a couple of years, he will not be satisfied with your words and his hunger will either kill him or incite him to make a riot. Similarly, when a big country is hungry, when most of her people begin to starve, is it proper to tell her to wait patiently for some time and that she will get food in due course? Is it possible that she can be intimidated with the help of guns and cannons? But after all cannons cannot appease hunger. Only the mind can be terrorised for a time but hunger again asserts itself and the country again agitates. Therefore no big agitations in a country can be suppressed for ever. Cannons and guns can by no manner or means suppress them nor have they been permanently suppressed in any country. They can only be temporarily suppressed but they again come to the surface with greater force and then if their aim is not achieved big revolutions take place in the country.

These are the questions that confront our country. Our problems regarding the peasants, the common people and even the educated classes are growing more acute every day and if no solution is soon found it will be necessary for the country to set her own wits to work and try to put an end to our present government, our existing social system, our present tenancy act and our existing zamindari system, if she cannot devise any other means to solve these problems.

These are the main problems before our country. The city of Sultanpur is a little cut off from the current of Indian politics, for such cities can neither be classed among the important cities nor the villages. The mental life and intellectual current which are the chief characteristics of urban areas do not affect such cities, and at the same time the residents of such cities consider themselves superior to the villagers. The result is that they make no progress either intellectually or in any other sphere. The condition of the smaller cities is like that of a backwater which, cut off from the main current, becomes stagnant and smells offensive after a time. Such is the intellectual atmosphere of these smaller cities. Sometimes such things take place in them that one is simply astonished to hear of them. You know that I go about day and night touring various places and placing the big problems of the country before the public; and in this connection I tour in my province also. Perhaps I would not ordinarily have come to Sultanpur so soon, but the reason why I have come here today is that

I have heard of a strange thing happening here.² Some days back I heard of it and was very much surprised. I thought to myself that it was a trifling affair and would be settled or suppressed in due course. But when I heard that it was still continuing and that our young boys were being sent to jail in that connection I tried to spare a few hours to come to you in order that I might see and enquire why this city of Sultanpur is such a peculiar city. You know that repression is being practised in our country on behalf of the government in no small measure. Thousands of our young boys and girls are still suffering imprisonment in our country. Thousands have been interned without trial. Our press acts are such that our presses, newspapers and books are gagged. In Bengal and the Frontier Province a sort of martial law is always enforced; and bear in mind that such things are being done by the government in these days when noncooperation and satyagraha movements have been called off. A long resolution was passed recently at Lucknow in this connection. It declared that the government is depriving the people of India of their civil liberties, and you would be surprised to know how soon we get used to everything. When oppression is first practised it appears to be a new thing, but we get used to it after a time. But the repressive laws which are enforced today had not been enforced in India since the days of the mutiny in 1857. If you try to understand its real meaning you will see that we should not be upset over it, for it only demonstrates the growing strength of our country, for the greater our strength the severer will be the laws of the government. So if you want to form an idea of the stage we have reached in our country's struggle for emancipation you can measure it by the amount of repression practised by the government and the number of repressive laws enforced by it. These repressive laws tell you how afraid the British Government is of us and how much it wants to suppress our strength. Some people tell us that we have been fighting the battle for a long time and ask if we have made any progress. This is a foolish question. When you approach a fort to attack it, the nearer you reach the fort the worse does your condition become. Two armies cannot occupy one fort, only one army can remain in it. As the second army approaches and reaches the foot of the walls of the fort the battle grows most fierce and it is just possible that shortly after the battle you may be occupying the fort having turned out the first army. It is not possible for two armies to occupy portions of the same fort. This is not possible as some of our brethren

2. Arrests were being made under the orders of the chairman of the Sultanpur municipality for holding meetings on the municipal grounds.

think. You can of course get a seat in their servants' quarters but two armies cannot occupy one fort. Therefore it is wrong to think that you can get Swaraj piecemeal. You cannot get it in instalments of one-eighth or one-fourth. You will get complete Swaraj whenever you may get it and you will have to exert yourselves to your utmost to do so.

The repression which is being practised in our country at present and the strict laws which are enforced nowadays have not been heard of since the great mutiny of 1857. These laws relate to our suppression, our arrest without trial and the gagging of our papers. It is believed in all countries that every individual has the freedom of expressing his opinion. Everybody is allowed to say freely what he thinks to be true and to publish it in newspapers; he has the right to hold meetings and to deliver speeches. No obstacles are thrown in the path of organisation of meetings. These and similar other liberties which are fundamental rights are enjoyed by the people in other countries. If people are deprived of these they have no other course open to them but to rise in rebellion.

So we are being deprived of these liberties and the government has practised and is still practising and will continue to practise sufficient oppression in the country. But it is strange that in your city of Sultanpur the chairman of your municipal board has committed the same acts for which we blame the government. It is a fundamental principle and is included among the civil liberties that people may have the right to hold meetings in public places. If they are banned, whether by government or by anybody else, it is an outrage upon the fundamental rights of civil liberties. Suppose a Congress meeting has been banned today, they can ban any meeting tomorrow and if we meekly submit they will begin to enjoy the right of banning our meetings. If you go to the villages all the land there belongs to one landlord or the other. So no meetings can be held in the villages nor can they be held in the cities if the municipalities say that all the land is theirs. All the roads and parks belong to the municipalities. But what is a municipality? It is held that what belongs to the municipality is public property. The members of the municipality are those residents of the city who have been elected by the public to manage the affairs of the city. If such obstacles are placed by the municipality in the path of your convening meetings and if you silently submit to its decision the result will be that all meetings will be stopped unless of course they are convened in a private house or garden. But even in that case many obstacles can be thrown in your way. So it is a matter of principle. Perhaps nine boys of your city have been convicted on account of this. It is a matter which deserves your close attention. Those who

are your representatives, at least nominally, those who represent you in the municipality, should not commit such an act that nine young boys of your city should go to jail for attempting to hold a meeting. You have to consider how far you can tolerate it. If you can tolerate this you can tolerate anything. I for one am not prepared to put up with this and I was very much incensed at it. I would have liked to come here to raise a violent opposition against it and some people were of the opinion that I should take up this work, but I do not want to wage a battle against the municipality on this issue. At present we are engaged in more important work and do not want to devote our time to these trifling matters. I therefore checked my anger but even then I deemed it my duty to come to this city and ascertain from its residents, who were so mutely submitting to all these things, the true facts. It is not good that the Sultanpur municipality and its chairman are doing such things here. If the chairman of any municipality did the same thing in England he could not hold his position even for five minutes. A riot would break out in that city. If he passed orders asking people to hold a meeting at such and such a place and disallowing them from assembling at any particular place, whether his chairmanship or post was a government one or not, the public would not tolerate it, either in England or in France. The doings of the government in various places in connection with our struggle for independence are the burning topic of the day. That is a question of a great battle; but it is a pity that our countrymen, specially those who are your representatives in name only and are members or the chairman of the municipality, should do such things. I have been told that it was no doubt the chairman who passed the order but as no member raised his voice against it the whole municipality is responsible for it.

This question does not relate to the chairman alone. You and I know that when any person, whether he is a member of the municipality or its chairman, does such an act, he does not give expression to his inner feelings but is propelled by other forces from behind. Generally government officials, when they get weak members or chairman of a municipality, make them their tools. But whoever may guide them from behind it is a burning disgrace to you that an independent person elected by you should act like this. Therefore bear in mind that the responsibility lies not only on the chairman but also on all the members of the municipality for they did not raise their voice against it. And I would go to the length of saying that it is not only the responsibility of the municipality but that of every resident of Sultanpur. It is disgraceful for you to have elected such members to the municipality. The members do such acts and you tolerate them. Whatever be the

forces working behind them, the world sees only the members of the municipality and they have been elected by you. They may even send your men to jail, but whatever they do, they do in your name and so you also share their disgrace and shamelessness. Therefore you should raise your voice and openly declare that you cannot tolerate this. You should make it clear now and also in the future. And you should also make it clear that if in the future you get an opportunity to hold elections, you would elect anybody rather than an individual who holds up your city to shame. You should make it clear that you do not regard him with respect. Rest assured, I do not know a single member of your municipality nor am I acquainted with the chairman although I have heard his name. I do not know even the names of the members and learnt the chairman's name only recently. I have also come to know that a couple of words have recently been added to his name.³ I have no personal relations with them. I do not know whether they are good or bad men or whether they are wise or unwise in my estimate. I do not know anything about their nature nor do I want to say anything in this connection; and I do wish that you who know them more intimately should not take note of it as a personal affair, but regard it as a matter of principle. So, whether they are your friends or foes, it is not a question of friendship or enmity. The point is that they are acting against a great principle. They are bringing disgrace on the city of Sultanpur and its residents. Leave aside the question of disgrace, they are depriving the citizens and the peasants of their right to hold meetings and these obstacles which they throw in your path will go on multiplying. They have prevented you from organising a meeting at that place today; they will, tomorrow, stop you from holding a meeting here and the day after tomorrow they will disallow your assembling at a third place. So if you have any respect for your liberty, it is your duty not only to wipe off the brand of disgrace from your forehead but also to prevent your hands and feet being tied in future. You should put up a bold opposition and demonstrate to them that you cannot tolerate such things. You should seize every opportunity to give expression to your feelings whether it be the time of election or some other occasion. When I thought of coming here today, I sent a letter to your chairman for it is my practice to talk with or at least enquire from the opposite party, before taking such a course of action, as to what he has to say. So I wrote to him and told him that I had heard such and such things about him and that I was surprised to learn that the chairman of any municipality could commit

3. The title of Rai Bahadur was conferred on him on 23 June 1936.



NAGPUR, APRIL 1936



BOMBAY, MAY 1936

such acts. He gave me a reply to my letter. By chance I was not at Allahabad. Only a day or two ago I went back to Allahabad, but received his letter only yesterday, though it had reached there a few days before. He may have received today the reply I sent to his letter. I was much astonished to read his reply. Leave out the local facts. It may be that there is some difference between the facts that he wrote to me and the facts that I heard from others. It is a matter of inquiry which facts are true and which are not. But what he admitted and what he wrote greatly astonished me. I was astonished that one who knew even a little of the present-day world and who was considered to be educated even a little should write to me in this way. When I came here and inquired as to what was his profession, for I did not know, I learnt that he was a *vakil*. This astonished me all the more, that a person practising as a *vakil* should be so ignorant of the basic principles of law. By basic principles of law I do not mean a law under which he may give orders and send people to jails. You know that in India laws can be and are framed overnight, the Viceroy puts his signature to it and the law is passed. At present to ride on a cycle is an offence in Bengal. You have to put on a particular kind of clothes and if you put on any others, you commit an offence. Every boy and girl has in his or her pocket, like an offender, an identity ticket, containing his or her photo. Perhaps, I do not remember, every boy and girl between twelve and twenty five years of age has to keep an identity ticket, so that any policeman may call him or her and examine the identity ticket before allowing him or her to go. The identity ticket is white, yellow or red. The white ticket shows that the holder is innocent, red that he is dangerous and some other colour, perhaps yellow, indicates that he is a suspicious character. I am not sure about this. The boys carry them. Besides these there are many other laws. One has to return to one's house before six in the evening. I do not know what is an offence and what is not. They are our rulers and the pen is in their hands. They can frame whatever law they like. I am astonished when a *vakil* writes something against the basic principles of law which he may or may not have read, on the basis of which there have been many struggles in England and other countries and in which a sufficient number of lawyers and law-knowing persons participated. The question of civil liberty, as to where meetings should or should not be held, has been the cause of many struggles in England. It seems that it has not reached his ears and mind, judging from his reply. His contention is simply that he is an officer and no one can dare to question his orders. As I have told you in the beginning, the dangerous thing is that our higher officers govern by sitting in the chair.

Advance a step forward and your municipal commissioners also in this way become your officers and begin to rule over you. "He who does not obey our orders may go to hell." This is a strange thing. I have ample experience of municipal affairs. I too have been a chairman of a large municipality. I never dared to give such orders as are given by your municipal officer of Sultanpur. Think how these ideas and ways are spreading in your country and in your city and if you do not stand against them your condition will gradually become worse. As soon as I arrived here I received a letter from your chairman asking me to see him, if I liked, at the municipal office or anywhere else. I would have gladly met him, but I would have liked to send certain books on law to him, so that he might refresh his knowledge of law. But I am rather helpless in the matter, for I have only just arrived and I have to go back immediately. Unfortunately I had difficulties on the way owing to some trouble with the car. It did not work properly and I know not what troubles I will have to face on my return journey. Tomorrow morning I am to leave for Wardha to attend the meeting of the Working Committee of the Congress, so I cannot stay, otherwise I would have certainly seen him, because it is always better to have a talk, no matter whether the other party understands it or not. But the difficulty is, as I have told you, that he considers that he is an officer and if anyone disobeys him, he should be sent to jail. This idea is quite wrong. Had I been a resident of Sultanpur, my first duty would have been to disobey his orders, as to obey such an order is to insult myself and my city. I would have opposed this order and agitated against it. I would have compelled him in every possible way not to issue such orders. Now it is for you to think. This is a trifling matter, but you should remember that even these trifling matters involve big issues. What will you do in important matters, when you cannot do anything in ordinary matters? You are being restrained; you cannot hold meetings, you cannot do this or that. Where will you say, then, what you have to say? It is necessary that you should think over this matter and show your strength. How to show strength? I do not wish that you should start satyagraha on this question, because we are preparing ourselves for a great task. I do not wish that you should get yourselves arrested and be sent to jail, but I do wish that you should carry on sufficient agitation against this and prove that the chairman and every member of your municipal board has brought your city into disgrace and is suppressing your liberties. You do not approve of their ways which are like those of higher officers. Their duty is to serve you. Had the deputy commissioner of your district prohibited you from holding meetings, it should have been the duty of

your municipal members and the chairman to support your cause against the deputy commissioner. The duty of the municipality is to fight for the freedom of the citizens, instead of depriving them of their liberty. You should bring all these things to light by carrying on an agitation. So far I have not referred to the removing of the Congress flag by him,⁴ as I wanted to tell you a matter of principle. That he removed the Congress flag from there has made me very angry. I have no particular hatred for the flag of any nation. Every country has a flag. But I do not like to see the flag of any other country, the British flag, in my country, for that is an emblem of our slavery. It is good if they keep it in their country. But I am hardly able to bear the lowering of our flag by anyone, whether he is an Indian or Englishman. The flag is a small piece of cloth, sometimes it is rolled up, and sometimes it is dirty, but thousands of persons have laid down their lives for it, because thousands of ideas are behind it. It carries the honour of the country, its freedom and its history. In one way it becomes the life and soul of the country and if anyone insults it, the flag is forgotten and the honour of the country occupies its place. If the officers of your municipality insulted the flag—as I have heard—by taking it out and removing it at night, it is shameful. If they are not permitted to fix the flag on the municipal grounds, they may not do so. You have also to think over this, that this is not their shame, for it is after all the shame of your city. It is shameful for him who tolerates this and for the whole of the municipality. I ask you not to offer satyagraha, but do carry on agitation and show your strength and express your opinions through the means you have. You should have a larger number of Congress members. The strength of the Congress as well as of the peasants should be increased here. You should therefore make efforts in this minor question, but first realise that the bigger issue is that there should be a *panchayati raj* and the hardships of our peasants and poor people should be removed. This you can do only when the Congress and other bodies are strongly organised as one unit. Do all this and then you will be able to get rid of this insult and participate in the great issues of the country and in the coming struggles.

4. In March 1936 a condolence meeting held on the death of Kamala Nehru was disrupted and the national flag was removed.

46. To S.M. Abdullah and Prem Nath Bazaz¹

It is not necessary for you to invite me to my homeland, for the desire to go there is always present within me. It is 19 years now since I went there and often long to be back, but circumstances have been too much for me and have prevented me from doing so. In my *Autobiography* which has come out recently, I have mentioned my love for Kashmir and my desire to go there, but the bigger problems of India keep me tied to this part of India. Those problems, as you know, ultimately affect Kashmir also, for the fate of Kashmir is bound up with that of the rest of India. If India is freed Kashmir will participate in that freedom. I cannot for a variety of reasons visit Kashmir in the near future much as I should like to do so.

I am very glad that you and other friends are trying to bring about unity amongst the Hindus and Mussalmans of Kashmir and spreading nationalistic ideas amongst them as well as the message of political, economic and social freedom. It is obvious to anyone who thinks that the real interests of the people are economic, and religious differences do not come in the way at all of a common political and economic front. It is terribly painful to compare the great beauty of Kashmir and its potential wealth with the terrible poverty of its people. Kashmir ought to be, and I hope will be, a land where the people can enjoy the real wealth of its soil and of its minerals and water power, and thus raise their standard of living very greatly and improve educationally, culturally and industrially. I wish you success in the work you are doing and through you I wish to convey my hearty greetings to the people of my homeland.

1. Printed in *The Hindustan Times*, 30 June 1936.
 Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah (b. 1905); president of the Kashmir National Conference from 1939 to 1953 except in 1942 and 1944; president, All India States People's Conference, 1946; prime minister of Kashmir, 1948-53.
 Prem Nath Bazaz (b. 1905); assisted Sheikh Abdullah in founding the National Conference; editor of *Hamdard*, a weekly, in 1935; author of a number of books on Kashmir.

47. To Mahatma Gandhi¹

Allahabad
July 5, 1936

My dear Bapu,
I arrived here last night. Ever since I left Wardha² I have been feeling weak in body and troubled in mind. Partly this is no doubt due to physical causes—a chill which has aggravated my throat trouble. But partly also it is due to other causes which touch the mind and the spirit directly. Since my return from Europe, I have found that meetings of the Working Committee exhaust me greatly; they have a devitalizing effect on me and I have almost the feeling of being older in years after every fresh experience. I should not be surprised if this feeling was also experienced by my colleagues of the Committee. It is an unhealthy experience and it comes in the way of effective work.

I was told, when I returned from Europe, that the country was demoralised and hence we had to go slow. My own little experience during the past four months has not confirmed this impression. Indeed I have found a bubbling vitality wherever I have gone and I have been surprised at the public response. What this is due to I cannot say definitely. I can only make various guesses. This public response has naturally heartened me and filled me with fresh energy. But this energy seems to ooze out of me at every meeting of the Working Committee and I return feeling very much like a discharged battery. The reaction has been greatest on this occasion because of my being physically in a low condition.

But it was not about my physical or mental condition that I wished to write to you. There are more important matters which worry me and so far I have seen no clear way out. I do not wish to act in a hurry or without giving the fullest thought to the matter. But even before my own mind is decided I want to tell you which way I am looking.

1. J.N. Correspondence. N.M.M.L. Reprinted in *A Bunch of Old Letters*, (Bombay, 1960), pp. 194-198.

2. Jawaharlal had gone to Wardha to attend the Working Committee meeting held from 29 June to 1 July 1936.

I am grateful to you for all the trouble you took in smoothing over matters and in helping to avoid a crisis.³ I was convinced then and I am convinced now that a break of the kind suggested would have had serious consequences for all our work, including the elections. And yet, where are we now and what does the future hold for us? I read again Rajendra Babu's letter to me (the second one) and his formidable indictment of me.⁴ That indictment, though formidable, is not specific, except for my speech at the women's meeting, which, as a matter of fact, has nothing to do with any wider issue. The main thing is that my activities are harmful to the Congress cause. They are doing damage to the Congress and are lessening its chances of success at the elections. If I continue in this way there is likely to be further deterioration and my colleagues do not wish to take any chances in this vital matter.

Now, obviously, if there is any truth in this charge it must be faced. The matter is too serious to be glossed over. There are no black and white shades, no delicate balancing of the resultant good or evil; it is all black and that really makes it easier to decide. For however tenderly the fact may be stated, it amounts to this: that I am an intolerable nuisance and the very qualities I possess—a measure of ability, energy, earnestness, some personality which has a vague appeal—become dangerous for they are harnessed to a wrong chariot. The conclusion from all this is obvious.

My own impression before Lucknow, and to some extent even at Lucknow, was that it should not be difficult for all of us to pull together this year. It is evident now that I was mistaken, though there has been no lack of trying on either side. Perhaps the fault may lie with me; I am not aware of it; but one can seldom see the beam in one's own eye. The fact remains, and today there is no loyalty of the spirit which binds our group together. It is a mechanical group and on either side there is a dull resentment and a sense of suppression, and that, as every student of psychology knows, results in all manner of undesirable complexes, both individual and social.

3. Seven members of the Working Committee including Rajendra Prasad, Rajagopalachari, Vallabhbhai Patel and Kripalani, resigned because they disagreed with Jawaharlal's socialist views, but were persuaded by Mahatma Gandhi to withdraw their resignations.
4. In his letter dated 1 July 1936, Rajendra Prasad blamed Jawaharlal for preaching socialism, a doctrine not accepted by the majority in the Working Committee, for launching a regular and continuous campaign against them, and for suggesting that the Working Committee had been forced upon him.

When I reached Bombay this time many people stared hard at me finding it difficult to believe how I had survived. It seemed to be common knowledge there (as reported in *The Times of India* previously) that a peaceful end awaited me—politically, of course. All had been fixed up except the cremation. Hence the surprise. It struck me as curious that I should be wholly ignorant of all these confident rumours when many people in the street were full of them. But though I had been ignorant of them, the rumours had the strongest justification. That in itself is a measure of my present isolation.

I have written at length, both in my book and subsequently, about my present ideas. There is no lack of material for me to be judged. Those views are not casual. They are part of me and, though I might change them or vary them in future, so long as I hold them I must give expression to them. Because I attached importance to a larger unity I tried to express them in the mildest way possible and more as an invitation to thought than as fixed conclusions. I saw no conflict in this approach and in anything that the Congress was doing. So far as the elections were concerned I felt definitely that my approach was a definite asset to us as it enthused the masses. But my approach, mild and vague as it was, is considered dangerous and harmful by my colleagues. I was even told that my laying stress always on the poverty and unemployment in India was unwise, or at any rate the way I did it was wrong.

You will remember that both in Delhi and in Lucknow I made it clear that I must have freedom to express my views on social matters.⁵ I understood you and the members of the Committee to agree to this. The question now becomes one more of this freedom of expression than of the views themselves. Even more so it is a question of values in life, and if we value anything greatly we may not sacrifice it.

There is this undeniable conflict. Who is right and who is wrong it is futile to argue. But after last week's incidents I am beginning to doubt if we are really following the correct course. I am inclined to think that the right thing for us to do will be to put the matter briefly before the A.I.C.C. at its next meeting and take its direction in the matter. How best to do this I am not clear yet but it should

5. At a meeting of the Working Committee in Delhi on 15 March and at the Lucknow session in April Jawaharlal made it clear that his election to the presidency did not necessarily mean endorsement of his views on social and economic matters by the majority or indicate that those views were spreading in India, but that he should be free to express them.

be done as simply as possible and without much argument. So far as I am concerned there will be little argument.

Presumably the result of this will be that I shall retire and a more homogeneous Committee will be formed.⁶

You told me that you intended issuing some kind of a statement. I shall welcome this for I believe in every viewpoint being placed clearly before the country.

I am not mentioning this matter to anyone yet. Of course prying and impertinent eyes will see this *en route* even before it reaches you. They have to be suffered.

In Bombay I had a talk with Mridula. She came from Ahmedabad for a few hours especially at my request. She gave me to understand that, so far as facts were concerned, she had noticed (or mentioned) no difference between what you had told her and what I had written or said. She had indeed made this clear in her letter to you but perhaps you missed a sentence or two. She proposed to send you a copy of her previous letter so that you might see this for yourself.

I was told in Wardha that it was being said by Gujarat women that you or Vallabhbhai or both were responsible for the exclusion of women from the Working Committee. I enquired from Mridula. She told me that to her knowledge nobody had said so or thought so.

I also had a talk with Sarojini on this subject.

I met Jivraj Mehta and Khurshed. Jivraj did not quite agree with Bidhan about the cost etc. But he brought down his previous figure somewhat. He now says that two lakhs ought to be enough for the construction, equipment etc. of the hospital.⁷ He would like to see another two lakhs as a reserve fund. He is also of opinion that the construction should be made not on the Swaraj Bhawan grounds, as originally planned, but on the fields to the east of Anand Bhawan. I shall make enquiries from the municipality about this.

I propose to convene a meeting of the Kamala Memorial trustees in Bombay about the time the A.I.C.C. meets. Also a meeting of the Swaraj Bhawan trustees.

6. In his reply of 8 July 1936, Mahatma Gandhi advised Jawaharlal to allow his "humour to play upon the meetings of the Working Committee" and said that "the country should not be made to suffer for your mutual intolerance."

7. It had been decided in April 1936 to set up a hospital in Allahabad as a memorial to Kamala Nehru.

In Bombay Nargis insisted on sending me to a German throat specialist and this man has told me to remain almost absolutely silent for a week in order to rest my throat. It is a hard job.

Love,

Yours affly.,
Jawaharlal

48. On the Women's Movement¹

I have received representations from a large number of Congress women from Gujarat, complaining against the indifference of the Congress Working Committee towards the questions affecting women. In particular, objection has been taken to the absence of any woman member in the present Working Committee.

I welcome the representation, although it is partly directed against me as President of the Congress, as it is a healthy sign of the growing political life among our womenfolk.

Regarding the non-inclusion of women in the Working Committee I must take the full responsibility. I need hardly say that there was or could be no idea on my part or that of others to exclude women as such. But circumstances were such that inevitably my choice was limited by them. Even so, it was certainly possible for me to nominate a woman member, but I decided to break the tradition in the hope that this would ultimately be good for women themselves. The representation I have received is itself a sign that some good has resulted from my decision.

The complaint about the indifference of the Working Committee towards the questions of women seems to be hardly justified except in so far as men can seldom grow enthusiastic about such questions. It must be remembered that the Congress has declared clearly, in the Karachi resolutions and elsewhere, that there should be no disqualification on the ground of sex in exercise of any public function.

Women in India have won, so far as the Congress is concerned, the fight for recognition of their equal status and civic rights which women

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 6 July 1936. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 7 July 1936.

of England had to carry on with great bitterness for generations before they succeeded. The door is thus open to them and it is for them to enter; but it seems that the long habit still makes them rely on others' goodwill rather than on their own efforts. That goodwill is there already in a large measure and certainly they should seek to increase it. But ultimately they will advance politically and socially by their own organised strength and not by seeking favour from others.

Politically they have already extorted admiration of the men of India by the gallant part they have taken in our freedom struggle. But their task in the social field is far harder; for, as soon as they try to rid themselves of these heavy social burdens, they come up against old customs and man's prejudices and interests. For this task they will have to rely on themselves alone though many of us, who have been their comrades politically, will gladly continue to share with them the burden of social struggle also.

I have been asked to induce the Working Committee to appoint a special women's sub-committee to look after the women's interests and help to organise the Congress women. I would gladly approach the Working Committee with this request and I have no doubt that they would like to help. But it seems to me that such a committee would be a little premature at present and might lull the women themselves into thinking that other people were working on their behalf. The initiative and driving force of a women's movement must come from women themselves. If Congresswomen organise themselves their efforts will be welcomed by the Working Committee and every help will, I am sure, be forthcoming.

49. To Secretary, Punjab Traders Association, Lyallpur¹

7.7.36

Dear Sir,

I am in receipt of your letter of the 26th June.²

My attention was drawn to certain statements made by you or on your behalf regarding the interview your deputation had with me in

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-17/1936, pp. 131-136, N.M.M.L.

2. The correspondent in his letter of 26 June 1936 had requested Jawaharlal to clear the doubt in the minds of the traders that he advocated repudiation of rural debts.

Lyallpur. These statements were obviously wrong and so, at the request of the secretary of the Lyallpur Congress Committee, I sent a brief note representing my views on the debt question.³ This was sent from Mussoorie on June 21st before I was aware of the proceedings of the meeting you held at Lahore. I understand that this note has been published in the press and you must have seen it. I have little to add to that note at present.

It seems to me that you are labouring under a misapprehension as to what I said at Lyallpur. I tried to say then what I have subsequently stated in writing and I pointed out to you that under present conditions the tremendous burden of rural debt was insupportable and could not remain as it was manifestly impossible for the debtors to meet their liabilities. Every person who has studied the problem impartially is driven to this conclusion. Indeed the question is not only an all-India one but a world-wide one and most foreign countries have adopted policies to reduce this burden considerably. Usually this is done by an inflation of the currency. Germany, France, England, Italy, the United States of America as well as almost all other countries have adopted this method. Some countries have also had recourse to legislation. In Germany almost the entire public and private debt was wiped off by inflation. Foreign debts which had to be paid in gold have long been withheld. In France inflation wiped off about 80% of the debt. In England the revaluation of the pound sterling reduced all debts by about 33%.

In addition to these devices great and rich countries like England and France have refused to pay their debts to the United States of America.

In India the policy of the government has been the very opposite of this. Owing to a high exchange ratio there has been deflation and debts have consequently risen and the burden on the rural masses has increased considerably. Even before the great world depression and fall in agricultural prices, it was held by competent authorities that the burden of agricultural debt was insupportable and was crushing the rural classes. This burden has vastly increased during the last seven years because of the fall in prices and the government's exchange policy.

Thus the position created is an intolerable one and everyone, whether he is a creditor or a debtor, must recognise this fundamental fact and seek to meet this position. How this is to be done is a matter for

3. See *ante*, item 42.

careful consideration for, obviously, the necessary changes should be made in such a way as to cause the least injury to various groups and as not to upset the whole credit system of the country without some provision for cheap credit.

To talk of complete cancellation or repudiation, so long as the present system endures, is to talk in the air. It has no meaning. But to talk of preserving existing debts is even more absurd for payment cannot be enforced when the debtor cannot pay. Trade and industry depend very greatly on the proper settlement of this question.

The whole question of internal debt is again mixed up with numerous other questions—foreign debt, the incidence of land revenue etc. All these have really to be considered together if a suitable solution is to be found. But I cannot enter into these questions in this letter.

My own view is that some kind of a moratorium is necessary to relieve the tension immediately. This will also give time for a proper consideration of the whole question and for a new adjustment. For this adjustment debt redemption boards should be established with power to scale down debts and interest keeping in view: (1) the fall in prices; (2) the paying capacity of the debtor.

In particular attention should be paid to relieving the burden on the poorest classes who are being crushed by it most.

I think that steps should also be taken to consider the whole question of foreign debt which is such a burden on the whole country.

These remarks of mine apply generally to the whole of India. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the special condition in the Punjab to suggest more detailed remedies for it. But I take it that the Punjab problem is not radically different from that of the rest of India. Every province will have to apply the same general principles in its own way to its own particular problems, an effort being always made to relieve the burden with the least injury to any group.

Whether all this is possible under the British Government I do not know. I doubt it. The position for almost all classes in India is pretty desperate and basic remedies are necessary. It is highly unlikely that the British Government in India, constituted as it is, and relying so much on the exploitation of the Indian masses, can undertake any big change which might touch adversely its own vested interests in the country. But it is highly desirable that everyone, whether he is a debtor or a creditor, should realise that existing conditions cannot continue and must be changed for the advantage of both.

You mention Maulana Zafar Ali Khan's name and the propaganda he is carrying on.⁴ Unless I know exactly what he has said regarding me I cannot confirm it or contradict it. But if what he says is in conflict with what I have written above then it does not represent my view.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. According to the correspondent, Zafar Ali Khan had undertaken propaganda that Jawaharlal was in favour of repudiation of rural debts.

50. Congress and Socialism¹

Socialism may be good or bad, it may be a dream of the distant future, or a problem of the present; whatever it is or might be, it seems to occupy a large corner of the mind of India today. The word is bandied about from right to left, and behind it lurks, we are solemnly told, the grim shadow of communism. True, the notion of many of its critics as to what is socialism is of the haziest. And even professional economists, after the manner of government propagandists, try to confuse the issue by dragging in God and religion and marriage and the degradation of women. We must not complain, although it is a tiring business to explain the alphabet to people who tell us that they can read. The curious part of it is that most of this talk and shouting about socialism comes from those who seem to dislike it and who do not want mention made of the word or the idea.

Socialism, as every schoolboy ought to know, is an economic theory which endeavours to understand and solve the problems that afflict the world today. It is also a way of looking at history and of trying to find from its wayward course the laws, if any, that govern human society. Vast numbers of people all over the world believe in it and seek to realise it. A great area from the Pacific to the Baltic is already under its sway; other great countries like France and Spain hover on the brink of it; and there is hardly a country in the world where it

1. 15 July 1936. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 20 and 31 July 1936. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 28-43.

has not got a numerous and faithful following. Neither the intelligence behind it, nor the numbers that support it, necessarily establish its truth. But they do demand a respectful and careful consideration of it by us in India. They put us on enquiry for our own problems, political and economic, loudly demand solution. After considering it we may reject it utterly, or we may learn something from it at least even though we do not accept it wholly. To ignore this vital impulse, which moves millions and captures both the minds and hearts of worthwhile people, can never be the path of wisdom.

But for us, it is rightly said, the political issue dominates the scene, and without independence all talk of socialism, or any other radical change in our economic system, is moonshine. Even a discussion about socialism introduces an element of confusion and divides our ranks. We must concentrate on political independence and that alone. This argument is deserving of consideration for we may not do anything which weakens us by breaking our joint front against imperialism. To some extent the premises are accepted by the most ardent socialist for he admits that political freedom is the first and the essential objective for us today. Everything else must necessarily follow it, and without it there can be no other radical change.

Thus much is common ground. Nationalism is admitted to be our primary urge and concern. And yet the way of looking even at this common objective is not the same.

Nobody wants to create division in our ranks and all of us talk continually of joint fronts against our powerful adversary. Yet we can hardly ignore conflicts of interests, and even as we advance politically (quite apart from socialism or the economic issue) these conflicts become more apparent. When the Congress came into the hands of the "extremists", the "moderates" dropped out. This was not because of any economic issue but simply because politically we were becoming more advanced and the moderate elements consciously and subconsciously felt that too great a political advance might endanger their interests. They dropped out. Yet curiously this split did not weaken the Congress, much as one might have regretted the parting from some old colleagues. The Congress drew into its fold large numbers of others and became a more powerful and representative organisation. Later came noncooperation and again some Congressmen could not keep with the great majority. They dropped out (again on the political issue, though behind it there were other issues) and again the Congress was not weakened. Vast numbers of additional people joined it and for the first time in its long history it became a power in our rural areas. It came to represent India as it had never done before

and to move millions by its mandates and advice. Thus the inherent conflicts between small groups at the top and the vast majority of our countrymen became ever more apparent as we advanced politically. We did not create them. We went ahead regardless of them and thereby increased in power and effectiveness.

Gradually other issues began to colour our political horizon. Gandhiji spoke about the peasantry; he led strong movements in Champaran² and Kaira.³ This was not a political issue though inevitably it had political repercussions. Why did he introduce this complication in the pure nationalism of our political movement? Why did he go about speaking of the terrible poverty of our people? This was new talk, a new orientation, likely to change the centre of gravity of our movement. He knew this well and deliberately he worked for this economic orientation of our political problem. Was it not largely because of this, as well as because of his great personality, that the millions rolled in under the banner of the Congress? All of us began to talk of the underdog, and the sorely tried and crushed underdog turned to us with relief and hope.

Gandhiji persisted in his stress on the poverty of India's millions. We knew this of course theoretically—who could forget it?—for we had the evidence of our own eyes, and the teaching of the giants of old—Dadabhai Naoroji, Digby, Ranade, Romesh Dutt. And yet it was a matter of books and statistics for us of the middle class. Gandhiji made it a live issue and we saw for the first time with horror-struck eyes what India was—a mass of hungry, starving, miserable people. To alleviate this hunger and unemployment he urged the revival of spinning and weaving. Many people who considered themselves very wise laughed at this, but the charkha, though it may not have gone far in solving the problem of poverty, brought relief to many. Even more so it gave a new spirit of self-reliance and cooperation to those who lacked this most. It played a brave part in our political movement. Here again we see an extraneous non-political issue influencing for good our national movement.

In later years Gandhiji also stressed the problem of the depressed classes. In doing so inevitably he angered some groups of *sanatanists*.

2. In Champaran in Bihar, the poor agriculturists were compelled by the European landlords to grow indigo on their lands. In 1917, Mahatma Gandhi launched a satyagraha movement, as a result of which the ryots received statutory relief.
3. In the Kaira (Kheda) district in Gujarat there was a crop failure in 1918. Mahatma Gandhi undertook satyagraha and secured suspension of the revenue collection in the case of "poorer ryots".

There was conflict between these representatives of old custom and vested interest and the progressive forces. For fear of this conflict Gandhiji did not hesitate to launch his great campaign against untouchability. It was not directly a political issue. Yet it was raised, and rightly raised.

So in the Congress and outside it we see these conflicts of interests ever coming to the front. Whether it is a measure of social reform, like the Sarda Act or Dr. Bhagavan Das's new bill,⁴ or a political measure affecting various interests, or a labour or peasant matter, this conflict of interests always comes up. Let us avoid conflict by all means, but how can one ignore it when it is there? And what are we to do about it? After sixteen years of stressing that we stand for the masses there can be only one answer to this question when this conflict affects them. That answer Gandhiji gave in one of his speeches at the Round Table Conference in London in 1931. "Above all," he said, "the Congress represents, in its essence, the dumb semi-starved millions scattered over the length and breadth of the land in its 700,000 villages, no matter whether they come from British India or what is called Indian India. Every interest which, in the opinion of the Congress, is worthy of protection has to subserve the interests of these dumb millions; and so you find now and again apparently a clash between several interests, and if there is a genuine real clash, I have no hesitation in saying, on behalf of the Congress, that the Congress will sacrifice every interest for the sake of the interests of these dumb millions."

Our ever-increasing contacts with the peasantry made us think more and more in terms of their grievances and their welfare. There were agrarian movements in Bardoli, in the United Provinces and elsewhere. Local Congress committees had often, almost against their will, to face the problem of the conflict of interests and to advise their peasant members as to their course of action. Provincial committees in some provinces did likewise.

In the summer of 1929 the All India Congress Committee itself, at a meeting held in Bombay, boldly faced the issue and gave an ideological lead to the country. With all its nationalist background and stress on political freedom, it declared emphatically that the economic structure of society was one of the root causes of our poverty. Its resolution ran thus:

4. Bhagavan Das's inter-caste marriage bill in the Legislative Assembly was ultimately defeated.

In the opinion of this Committee, the great poverty and misery of the Indian people are due not only to the foreign exploitation of India but also to the economic structure of society, which the alien rulers support so that their exploitation may continue. In order therefore to remove this poverty and misery and to ameliorate the condition of the Indian masses, it is essential to make revolutionary changes in the present economic and social structure of society and to remove the gross inequalities.

Revolutionary changes! I ventured to use these words not so long ago in Lucknow city and some people thought that they were new on a Congress platform. Few socialists could improve on this general declaration of policy and outlook. Yet it would be absurd to say that the Congress had gone socialist. It was becoming more and more concerned with the poverty and misery of the Indian people and the realisation was growing that mere political changes were not enough, something more was necessary. That something more was a change in the present economic and social structure, a revolutionary change. What this change was going to be, it did not state; it was naturally, under the circumstances, vague and undecided about it.

Civil disobedience came, a political movement for a political objective. Again we saw a conflict of interests coming to the forefront and the big vested interests, fearing a far-reaching political change, opposed the movement and supported the British Government. In some areas, like the United Provinces, the conflict of interests was more marked because of the agrarian upheaval.

At Karachi the drive towards an economic orientation became more marked. The Congress hesitated to go far but it could not hold back. Again it declared that "in order to end the exploitation of the masses political freedom must include real economic freedom of the starving millions." It talked in terms of a living wage and it declared that "the state shall own or control key industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of public transport." A socialistic proposal, yet it was still far from socialism.

Thus has Congress been driven by force of events and the pressure of reality to face the economic issue. With all its passion for political freedom it could not isolate it from economic freedom. The two were inseparably bound up together. We have tried to keep them apart and to concentrate on political freedom, but economic problems would insist on barging in. We would shut our eyes to the conflicts of interests and yet, even on the political plane, these conflicts became ever more apparent. The Round Table Conference provided a revealing

display of vested interests lining up behind British imperialism and opposing the forces that were working for Indian freedom.

Memories are short and many people forget this recent history of the Congress and of India. Socialism or a change of the economic structure of society are not new ideas unheard of previously in the Congress; nor is the conflict of interests a novel conception. And yet it is perfectly true that the Congress is not socialistic today. But whether it is socialistic or not, it ceased many years ago to be an organisation thinking in political terms only and ignoring economic issues. As I write, one of its principal activities is to enquire into peasant grievances and draw up an agrarian programme. It must face this and other urgent economic problems. And in doing so, wherever conflicts of interests appear, as they are always appearing, all interests that clash with those of the masses will have to be sacrificed.

It is clear that we must concentrate on the political issue—the independence of India. That is of fundamental and primary importance for us and any activity or ideology which blurs that issue is undesirable and not to be encouraged. On that I take it there is agreement amongst Congressmen of all ranks. Why then this talk of socialism?

As I understand it, it is not because any socialist imagines that socialism can have any place in India before political freedom has been established. It can only follow independence if India is ripe for it and the great majority of the people desire it. But the socialistic outlook helps in the political struggle. It clears the issues before us and makes us realise what the real political content (apart from the social content) of freedom must be. Independence itself has been variously interpreted, but for a socialist it has only one meaning and that meaning excludes all association with imperialism. Therefore stress is laid on the anti-imperialist character of our political strength and this gives us a yard measure to judge our various activities.

Further the socialist outlook stresses (what the Congress has been emphasizing in varying degrees during these past fifteen years) that we must stand for the masses and that our struggle should be of the masses. Freedom should mean the ending of the exploitation of the masses.

This brings us to a consideration of the kind of Swaraj we are aiming at. Dr. Bhagavan Das, with a most commendable persistence, has been demanding for many years that Swaraj should be defined. I do

not agree with him in some of his views⁵ but I do agree with him that we cannot go on talking vaguely about Swaraj without indicating, however roughly, what kind of Swaraj we are aiming at. Are the present owners of vested interests to be the successors of the British in the governance of the country? Obviously that cannot be the Congress policy for we have often declared that we are against the exploitation of the people. So inevitably we must aim at strengthening the masses so that they may effectively hold power when imperialism fades away from India.

That strengthening of the masses, and of the Congress organisations through them, is not only necessary because of our objective, but because of the strength itself. Only the masses can give real strength to that struggle, only they can carry on the political fight to the end.

Thus the socialist outlook helps us in our present struggle. It is not a question of carrying on now a useless academical argument about a distant and problematic future, but of shaping our policy now so as to make our political struggle more powerful and effective. This is not socialism. It is anti-imperialism. It is the political aspect as seen from the socialistic viewpoint.

Socialism of course looks further ahead. It aims at social reconstruction based on an elimination of the profit motive. That is not possible today and so the consideration of it may appear to some as academic and premature. But that view would be short-sighted indeed. For the consideration and clarification of the objective, even though we may not decide about it, affects our approach to it. In whose hands will power come when political freedom is achieved? For social change will depend on this, and if we want social change we must see that those who desire such change have the power to bring it about. If this is not what we are aiming at, then it means that all our struggle is meant to make India safe for vested interests who desire no change.

The socialist approach is the approach of Marxism. It is a way of looking at past and present history. The greatness of Marx none will deny today and yet few realise that his realistic interpretation of events, which has illumined the long and tortuous course of history, was not a sudden and brilliant innovation. It had deep roots in the past; it was known to the old Greeks and Romans as well as to European thinkers

5. Bhagavan Das propounded the view that *varnashram dharma*, if suitably modified, could be a complete system of socialism. Jawaharlal in his letter of 8 August 1936 expressed his disagreement and said that it did not "meet modern economic problems of an international character."

of the Renaissance and onwards. They conceived of history as a movement and a conflict of ideas and interests. Marx applied science to this old philosophy, developed it and made it the brilliant exposition that has so impressed the world. There may be lacunae in this exposition, over-emphasis here and there. We must not look upon it as a set of dogmas, but as a scientific way of looking at history and social changes. Much is made of the fact that Marx emphasized the economic side of life only. He did emphasize it because it is important and because there had been a tendency to ignore it. But he never ignored the other forces which have moved human beings and shaped events.

Marx is a name that terrifies some people who know little about him. It may interest them to know what one, who, far from being an agitator, is a very respectable and honoured British Liberal, said not long ago. Lord Lothian, in the course of the annual oration at the London School of Economics in June 1931, said:

Is there not more truth in the Marxian diagnosis of the ills of modern society than we have been accustomed to think? I confess that the prophecies of Marx and Lenin are being realized with the most uncomfortable accuracy. When we look round at the Western world as it is, and the persistence of its troubles, is it not obvious that we must probe into the fundamental causes far more deeply than we have been in the habit of doing? And in so doing, I think that we may find that a good deal of the Marxian diagnosis is true.

This confession from one who might easily have been Viceroy of India is significant. In spite of all the prejudices of his class and the powerful pressure of his environment, his keen intelligence could not help being attracted by the Marxian diagnosis. Lord Lothian may have changed his opinion during the past five years. I cannot say how far what he said in 1931 represents his thoughts today.

But Marxism is not an issue before the Congress today. The issue is whether we must fight the evil effects that we see around us or seek the causes that underlie these. Those who concern themselves with the effects only seldom go far. "They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, but not with the causes of these effects; they are retarding the downward movement, but not changing its direction, that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady."

That is the real problem—effects or causes. And if we seek for causes, as we must, the socialist analysis throws light on them. And thus though the socialist state may be a dream of the distant future,

and many of us may not live to see it, socialism is a beacon light of the present, lightening up the path which we have to tread.

So socialists feel. But they must know that many others, their comrades in the present struggle, do not think so. They cannot assume, as some do, an attitude of superior knowledge and make of themselves a sect apart. They have to justify themselves in other ways and thus seek to win over to their way of thinking those other comrades and the country at large. For whether we agree or differ about socialism, we march together to the goal of independence.

51. In a Train¹

Friends often ask me: When do you read? My life seems pretty full of various activities, some useful perhaps, others of a doubtful utility. It is not easy to make friends with books and live in their charmed world when the horrid business of politics consumes our youth and eats up our days and nights which, under a better dispensation, would be given to happier pursuits. Yet even in this dreary round I try to find a little time at night to read some book that is far removed from politics. I do not succeed always. But most of my reading takes place in railway trains as I journey to and fro across this vast land.

A third class or an intermediate class compartment is not an ideal place to read in or do any work. But the invariable friendliness of my fellow-travellers and the courtesy of railway officials make a difference and I am afraid I cannot pretend to experiencing all the discomforts of such travelling. Others insist on my having more than my fair share of space, and many acts of courtesy give a pleasant human touch to the journey. Not that I love discomfort or seek it. Nor do I indulge in travelling third class because there is any virtue in it or principle involved. The main consideration is one of rupees, annas and pies. The difference in third class and second class fares is so great that only dire necessity induces me to indulge in the luxury of second class travel.

1. Written on his way to Karachi from Allahabad, 17 July 1936. First printed in the *Modern Review*, August 1936, pp. 187-188. Later reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 1-5.

In the old days, a dozen years ago, I used to write a great deal while travelling, chiefly letters dealing with Congress work. Repeated experience of various railway lines made me judge them from the point of view of facility of writing on them. I think I gave first place to the East Indian Railway; the North Western was fair; but the G.I.P. Railway was definitely bad and shook one thoroughly. Why this was so I do not know, nor do I know why fares should differ so greatly between the different railway companies, all under state control. Here again the G.I.P. Railway stands out as one of the most expensive and it will not even issue ordinary return tickets.

I have given up the habit of writing much in a train. Perhaps my body is less flexible now and cannot adjust itself so well as it used to to the shaking and jolting of a moving train. But I carry a box full of books with me on my journeys, taking always far more than I can possibly read. It is a comforting feeling to have books around one even though one may not read.

This journey was going to be a long one, to far Karachi, almost it seemed to me after my air journeys, half-way to Europe. So my box was well filled with a variety of books. I started off, as was my wont, in an intermediate class compartment. But at Lahore, the next day, fearful and terrifying accounts of the heat and the dust on the way weakened my resolve and I promoted myself to the luxuries of second class travel. Thus travelling in style and moderate comfort I went across the Sind desert. It was as well that I did so for even in our closely shuttered compartment clouds of fine dust streamed in through all manner of crevices and covered us layer upon layer, and made the air heavy to breathe. I thought of the third class and shuddered. I can stand heat and much else but dust I find much more difficult to tolerate.

Among the books I read on the long journey was one about a remarkable and unusual man, Edward Wilson,² lover of birds and animals and comrade unto death of Scott in the Antarctic regions. The book had a double appeal to me for it had come to me from yet another remarkable man. It was a gift from A.G. Fraser, for long principal of the Achimota College in West Africa, that noble and unique monument of African education which he had built up with labour and sympathy and affection.

The sandy, inhospitable desert of Sind passed by as the train sped along, and I read of the Antarctic regions and of man's gallant fight

2. Wilson was one of the five members of Scott's expedition who reached the South Pole and died on the return journey.

against the elements, of human courage that conquered mighty nature itself, of endurance almost beyond belief. And of high endeavour and loyalty to comrades and forgetfulness of self and good humour in the face of every conceivable misfortune. And why? Not for any advantage to the persons concerned, not even obviously for the public good or the marked benefit of science. Why then? Simply because of the daring that is in man, the spirit that will not submit but always seeks to mount higher and higher, the call that comes from the stars. Most of us are deaf to that call but it is well that a few hear it and ennoble our present generation. To them life is a continual challenge, a long adventure, a testing of their worth:

"I count life just a stuff
To try the soul's strength on....."

Such a one was Edward Wilson and it is well that after having reached the Southern Pole, he had his companions lay down for their final rest in those vast Antarctic regions where the long day follows the long night and silence reigns. There they lie surrounded by immeasurable expanses of snow and ice, and over them the hand of man has put up a fitting inscription:

"To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield."

The Poles have been conquered, the deserts surveyed, the high mountains have yielded to man, though Everest still remains proud and unvanquished. But man is persistent and Everest will have to bow to him, for his puny body has a mind that recognizes no bounds and a spirit that knows no defeat. And then, what remains? The earth becomes smaller and smaller and romance and knightly adventure seem to go out of it. We are even told that a flight to the Pole may be a common occurrence before long. And the mountains have funiculars running up their sides and luxury hotels at the top where jazz bands break the stillness of the night and mock the eternal silence of the snows, and dull middle-aged people play bridge and talk scandal, and bored and blase young people and old seek pleasure feverishly, and seek it in vain.

And yet, adventure is always there for the adventurous, and the wide world still beckons to those who have courage and spirit, and the stars hurl their challenge across the skies. Need one go to the Poles or the deserts or the mountains for adventure when the adventure of life is there for all who care? What a mess we have made of this life of

ours and of human society, and with plenty and joy and a free development of the human spirit open to us, we yet starve in misery and have our spirits crushed in a slavery worse than that of old. Let us do our bit to change this so that human beings may become worthy of their great inheritance and make their lives full of beauty and joy and the things of the spirit. The adventure of life beckons and it is the greatest adventure of all.

The desert is covered with darkness but the train rushes on to its appointed goal. So also perhaps humanity is stumbling along though the night is dark and the goal hidden from us. Soon the day will come and instead of the desert there will be the blue-green sea to greet us.

52. Message to Students¹

I have been told that the students of Sind and also of the Punjab are a bad lot. They are not interesting themselves in things which ought to interest them.

Sind is a peculiar province and Karachi is a unique city inasmuch as side by side with plenty there is appalling poverty. Those who shouted loudest at the time of the partition of Sind are cooling fastest today. The students have no standards of life except an academical one of examinations. I have no objection to students having a good time but all depends on what meaning they attach to this expression. Students should take keener interest in national and international affairs.

Recently a case of acute unemployment has been reported from Calcutta when thousands applied for a constable's job including B.A.'s and M.A.'s. Young men and women should face and solve this problem.

I advise you not to drift but to pursue definite ideals. Be big yourselves; think in a big way; act in a big way.

1. Karachi, 18 July 1936. From *The Hindu*, 19 July 1936.

53. Address to the Congress Socialist Conference¹

Any country which does not love freedom is doomed. The Congress faces the problem of unemployment and poverty which it is trying to solve and I recognise the righteousness of socialists' claims in this connection. There is plenty in the country, but we are dying inch by inch.

The new constitution seeks to make the country safe for imperialism. When Tilak came into the Congress, several left it. The same occurred with the entry of Mahatma Gandhi. But the Congress is none the less strong for these defections.

Congress and socialism are interrelated. While the objective of the Congress is the achievement of the country's freedom, socialism throws scientific light on the problems which the Congress is seeking to solve. The country's freedom comes before any other nationalistic activity. The socialistic remedy to the country's ills cannot be obtained in a day or two. Therefore the socialists should win over antagonists inside the Congress by love.

1. Karachi, 20 July 1936. From *The Hindu*, 20 July 1936.

54. The Election Campaign in U.P.¹

The U.P. Provincial Congress Committee has fixed the 1st of August for starting its campaign to spread the message of the Congress afresh in this province and to remind our people of the new phase of our struggle for freedom. For our object remains ever the same—the independence of India—and till we attain it we shall continue our struggle for it. To attain that object we want an efficient and powerful instrument and organization. The recent history of India has shown without a doubt that only the Congress can be such an organization and can carry us forward to our goal. Therefore all who hold the freedom of India dear and wish to end the exploitation and misery of her people must rally to the Congress and stand under the national flag which has become for us the flag of Indian freedom.

1. Message to the electorate. *The Hindustan Times*, 1 August 1936.

Reactionaries and others are trying to close their ranks in order to oppose the Congress. By doing so, whether they will it or not, they support the government and obstruct our march to freedom. To all such we shall offer the firmest of opposition and I am convinced that as in the past we shall win through.

The coming elections already cast their long shadow over the country. The Congress has decided to contest them, not in order to work the new Act, but to continue our freedom struggle. We shall go forward to these elections, with all our united strength and with the will to win despite all odds. That we shall win I have no doubt. But we have an array of vested interests against us, from the vast interests of British imperialism downwards. Therefore we must organize ourselves and pull together.

The 1st of August is a red-letter day in our history. On that day sixteen years ago Lokamanya Tilak, the great herald of the dawn in India, passed away. On that day began the noncooperation movement which was to change the face of India. Therefore it is a fitting day for the beginning of our campaign. May success attend it.

55. On the Punjab Tour¹

The Punjab is an astonishing province. Sometimes it seems as if it were a stumbling-block in the way of Indian progress and freedom, forgetful of the great issues before the country and lost in petty squabbles; at other times its eyes light up, afire with enthusiasm, and its strong arms stretch out in yearning for the freedom from which we have been so long parted. Almost it seems then that it is destined to blaze a trail for others to follow. So the pendulum swings with the waywardness of youth, for the faults and the virtues of the Punjab are those of youth. And youth, in spite of its faults, is a priceless heritage. From youth much is expected, to youth much may be forgiven.

It was my privilege to see during these last few days, as well as during my previous tour, this happier aspect of youth in the Punjab, a youth which was not confined to the young in years but which affected equally those older in facing and carrying the burdens of life. Hundreds of thousands of brave faces met me, eager eyes full of hope, ears

1. Statement to the press, 3 August 1936. *The Hindustan Times*, 4 August 1936.

listening to the call of political and social freedom, and strong arms that were quivering for action. The sight of them made me forget the weariness of a heavy programme and in response to that call of youth my own blood tingled in my veins. I can never forget this tour of mine in the Punjab and the unbounded love and affection that were showered on me from all groups and classes of people. That debt is beyond my capacity to pay. All I can hope for is to have strength given to me to stand shoulder to shoulder with so many brave comrades in the great struggle to come. And I shall venture to hope that this fine and intoxicating enthusiasm will not end in froth but will be harnessed and directed to right ends; that the Punjab will remember that the real problems which face it, as well as the rest of the country, are those of poverty and unemployment and national freedom; that all others are minor issues, however big they may seem for the moment. Especially I hope that the Punjab will extricate itself from the morass of communalism and pay no heed to the false and misleading counsels of narrow-minded communalists whoever they might be. We aim at big things; we aim at bringing freedom again to this old country of ours and the removal of the terrible burden of poverty and social injustice from our people. Let us stretch ourselves then and make ourselves big to face these tasks.

I hope the Punjab will stand solidly with the Congress, for only the Congress has the will and the capacity to face these tasks. The Congress should be not merely a collection of committees and a few leaders at the top but a broad-based popular organization deriving its strength and its general direction from the countless members in its wide fold. And Congressmen must remember that the only real enemy of the cause is the spirit of faction and narrow-minded intolerance of others within the fold.

I must send greetings also on this occasion to our brave comrades of the Frontier Province. I went to the very threshold of that province but did not enter it. I was glad however to meet many friends who came from Rawalpindi and to learn from them of the innumerable obstructions that are placed in their way by the government. That in itself is a tribute to their strength and their desire for freedom. They will overcome them as they have overcome so many other obstacles in the past. News comes today, welcome news, of the discharge of their great and noble leader, beloved comrade of ours, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. We rejoice to have him back and yet his freedom is a conditioned and confined freedom for he may not, according to government orders, enter the Punjab or his own province. We shall control our resentment at this treatment of our leaders and make it strengthen our

resolve to uproot this system which crushes us and insults those we hold so dear.

56. To Agatha Harrison¹

August 6, 1936

My dear Agatha,

I have received at least 3 letters from you which await reply. But as you know I have been on the move during the last three weeks travelling huge distances and being made to speak innumerable times daily. My usual programme began with the dawn and carried me on till midnight. I have completely lost count of the number of places I visited and the meetings I addressed. If I travelled by train almost every station meant a disturbance, if by car every few miles our car was held up by a crowd. It is not the kind of existence I would recommend to a friend. I think I deserve some kind of a prize or medal for endurance. I hung on to the end and yet another day might have made a difference....

Yours very sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

57. To George Joseph¹

August 7, 1936

My dear George,

Thank you for your letter. It came during my tour in Sind and I have just returned to Allahabad.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

I do not remember reading your article on *Ramrajyam*. Your question to me surprises me.² Have you gone so far astray as to think in terms of fascism? I have no intention of killing myself with overwork and I have the strongest objection to being hanged. I agree that Lenin is much beyond reach but why this fall to Mussolini or Hitler? Politics apart, I dislike the vulgarity of Mussolini as well as the fascism in Germany. Why does fascism breed such crude types, or is it the crude types that beget fascism?

Yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. In his letter of 18 July 1936 Joseph wrote, "There is one question I should like to ask you: why do you stop with it (socialism), why don't you go on to the next step, fascism, and be done with it. Of course, fascism is a reaction against socialism, just as socialism is a reaction against capitalism. I shall put it in Hegelian terms: capitalism is the thesis, socialism is the anti-thesis and fascism is the synthesis."

58. Reality¹

The elections are yet far off; half a year has to pass before this mimic war will be upon us. But their long shadow darkens the horizon and hoarse and strident voices assail our ears. Our newspapers are full of them and our middle class intelligentsia talk of little else. Yet as I wandered in Sind and the Punjab, this tumult and shouting seemed to be a little unreal, the talk of candidates and pacts and manoeuvres and intrigues ruffled the surface only. Underneath this surface I sensed strange currents, I heard a deep rumbling. Why did these vast crowds, especially in the rural areas, gather together or wait long hours by the roadside? Not surely to see or hear a person who had gained notoriety, or just to pay their homage to the Congress. There was a deeper urge, a hunger that gnawed and required satisfaction. And perhaps if we could understand this urge and this hunger, we would also understand somewhat the problem of India.

1. Statement issued at Allahabad, 9 August 1936. *The Hindu*, 12 August 1936. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 41-43.

But we are too absorbed in our election tactics or in the communal decision or in a mosque dispute, and the millions pass by ignored and not understood. They have not the gift of explaining their urges and their hunger, and our eyes look another way.

It was an extraordinary experience to see these scores of thousands of Punjab peasants. They were not exuberant or loud-voiced like city-folk, the outward signs of enthusiasm were often lacking. There they sat quietly and stolidly but behind that quietness there was commotion and underneath that peasant stolidity there were reserves of power and a deep unrest. As I watched them and tried to look within them I thought of a volcano which has long seemed extinct but which shakes again with inner fire, and of the sea which begins to darken before a storm.

Our meetings were sometimes interfered with by the police and the authorities, the organisers were arrested or interned, especially those who were suspected of socialist leanings.² It was made clear that high authority did not approve of these gatherings.

"By the King's Majesty it is proclaimed
Now doff your caps, you ill-conditioned pack!
That high authority is made aware
Of leagues in secret join'd by lawless men
Against the peace and order of this realm."

And yet the ill-conditioned pack came in its thousands and ever the cry was the burden of land revenue and debt. No one talked of the communal decision, or of Shahidganj, or of Muslim demands or Hindu rights. Hindus and Muslims and Sikhs thought and talked only in terms of the common burdens they suffered under. And as I sat with them, the trivial conflicts of the cities receded into the distance and seemed utterly unimportant before these mighty manifestations of peasant India. For those who solve this problem of the peasant in India, it will be well. But those who fail to do so will vanish like the snows of yester-year.

2. There were reports of arrests and gagging orders which had been served on the Congress Socialists while the latter were engaged in election propaganda.

59. To Prem Nath Bazaz¹

August 9, 1936

My dear Prem Nathji,

Your letter of the 15th July came here during my absence in Sind. I returned a few days ago after a long tour.

I appreciate your difficulties.² To a greater or lesser extent we have to face similar difficulties everywhere. But we must stick to principles and try to look at the real problem. Any other course would be short-sighted and wanting in intellectual integrity. It would also be doomed to ultimate failure.

I am glad to learn that a youth league has been started.³ I hope this will keep the long view before it and work for the full freedom of all people in the state—men as well as women. It is folly to imagine that a handful of middle class people will prosper for long if the whole foundation of the state rests on poverty-stricken masses.

You are at liberty to publish our correspondence if you so desire it.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. 21/1936, p. 99, N.M.M.L.

2. He had complained of the opposition of communal elements to his work.

3. The youth league was intended to develop secular nationalism in Kashmir.

60. Speech at the All India Students Conference¹

I have come here on your bidding, but I must confess that I am not as eminent as our president, Mr. M. A. Jinnah, who is a distinguished leader and who will guide you in your deliberations. First of all, may I thank you, Mr. President, for your kind words about me? May I remember an occasion, about a quarter of a century ago, when I first met you? It was in Europe—I am not sure whether it was in Paris or somewhere else, but it was in Europe, and at that time I was a

1. Lucknow, 12 August 1936. U.P. Government, Secret Police Abstract of Intelligence No. 33, 22 August 1936.

student at Cambridge while you had already achieved distinction in the political service of the country.

So far as most of us are concerned we always try our best to tackle the problems with which we are concerned in the best way we can. I propose to say something rather about the background of your problems than about the immediate problems themselves. Partly of course it is due to the fact that I am not competent to deal with the immediate problems.

As many of you know, it is one of my failings, of which I am constantly reminded, that I am always fighting shy of the immediate problems which face us, whether they are in the domain of politics, in which I chiefly perform, or in other spheres of national activity. I confess to that failing. With your leave I will talk for a while about various big questions which do not perhaps immediately affect you, but which I think have a vital consequence for each one of us. Now tell me, what do you think has the question of Palestine to do with the students in India? Most of you do not know anything about it except as something entirely separate and different from your daily life and activities. For the matter of that the question, the great tragedy that is taking place today, what has that to do with the students in India? Has that any consequence? I may tell you that the question of Palestine has far greater interest for me than all the odd news that the Indian newspapers tell me and the odd talks and shouts and tumults about the coming elections and the like. Why, I will tell you. Not because I attach less importance to matters which concern India immediately, but because they are matters which affect you and India and the whole of the world. Take the Spanish civil war that is going on now. That has enormous possibilities for good or for ill and which will make the future of Europe. It will ultimately decide, not for ever—because nothing can be decided for ever—but it will decide which way the balance of forces lies. It is not merely a civil war in a fairly backward country in Europe but it is a conflict between two great forces which you see represented in various shapes in various parts of the world, the forces which might be called roughly the forces of progress on one side and the forces of reaction on the other. Sometimes it is difficult for you to draw a line between the two because there are many middle forces. Those who are not clear in their minds do not exactly know the groups of people who are sometimes moved by emotions and urges. You will find that all over the world today it is a conflict between the progressive section of the world and the reactionary side of the world, whether it is in eastern Asia or western Europe or anywhere, and the result is that this conflict will make a most vital and

tremendous impact on the world including India as much as on Spain or France, because in India the whole of the conflict, political or economic, that is going on here, is ultimately a reflex of that wider conflict. You have many middle forces and many middle groups but you can see on the one side progressive forces working for the moment for the freedom of India and on the other side forces backing British imperialism and working for the continuation of the dominion of India. That is the political side and that is the most important side for the moment, but behind that you have the economic side and other sides. So you see all over the world this tremendous conflict going on and it is most important that you should understand it. It is important not only because you are students and as students it is your function, and it should be your duty, to understand what is happening in the world. What is your education? After all education is meant to fit you for life, that is to say, not only in your narrow spheres but you will have later on to understand the big problems of life. Today really there is no narrow sphere for anyone. Big volcanoes are getting into action and today you are seeing in the world enormous political upheavals and human earthquakes, either really taking place or threatening us in the near future. You cannot escape them. Therefore as Indian citizens it should be your business to understand all this. As students you should understand it not from the propagandist's point of view but from the scholarly and academic point of view, considering both sides of the question and then deciding in your own mind on which side your sympathies go, because you cannot remain inactive if you want to function properly and if I may say so your professors, if they do not try to make you understand these problems, are failing in their duty.

When you go out of the university you will find that you are not fit for anything in the world. After all, the fundamental problem before you and humanity as a whole is the freedom of India, political, social and economic and the relation of man to man, of man to woman, of man to society. These are the basic fundamental problems of humanity wherever you may live and we want a proper solution of these problems, but it is on account of vested interests that exist in India that these problems cannot be solved properly. We are therefore trying to get rid of these vested interests so that we may have freedom to move; and therefore it becomes necessary for us to consider our problems in relation to the wider problems. In India as you know one of the things that has been before us for some time past has been the communal question. It is a nuisance. It crops up at all moments. Why is it a nuisance? It is a nuisance for many reasons, but it is a

nuisance chiefly, I think, because it diverts your attention from the real problems of the country. It is bad in itself because it makes us petty-minded, but ultimately it is utterly bad because it hides from our view the really big problems that affect our country and the people of the world at large, and I want you as students especially to try to understand these petty daily problems, almost local problems, and try to solve them, because you will have one day to face them. But you cannot understand them unless you have the proper background in India. After all, you cannot go anywhere unless you know the direction in which you are going and the objective you are aiming at. I feel sure we shall achieve our object not only because of the growing strength of India, not only because they are big problems, real problems as we call them, but because the problems are becoming more and more insoluble and insoluble problems have a knack and a way of rising up and solving themselves in spite of people, in spite of governments and in spite of vested interests and the like. Those who are students of history perhaps have read about revolutions and changes. But have you ever sought to find the real reason behind the revolution and the change? People who have won military victories did not win them on account of their personality but on account of the big forces that shaped their personality, and they were only figureheads in those victories. You must have heard of Chengiz Khan. He was an outstanding military genius but even behind Chengiz Khan there were extraordinary forces driving him south and west. Individual personalities have enormous forces working behind them. You can see it was obvious in the past and today it is becoming more and more evident. You can see those forces in action today and there is absolutely no reason why any person should not try to understand these great forces. Now if you look at India as well as the world you will find that there are enormous forces crying aloud for a solution; problems affecting the peasantry, the working classes, the artisan class, shopkeepers, middle class, etc. They affect us all. Now what do the students know about what is happening? What is going to happen to you? You must know that every person who goes out as B.A. or M.A. from the university swells the number of the unemployed. He has no job, he has no profession, he has no business; simply because he has not been trained properly. He wastes time over securing petty jobs, which is a most unhealthy thing. That is one aspect of this enormous unemployment problem, but the unemployment problem has another aspect, that is the economic aspect. So if this problem is not solved satisfactorily what is going to happen? We are apt too much to think in terms of law and legal circumstances—circumstances and safeguards and

compromises—as if half a dozen prominent individuals and leaders can by meeting together solve the vast problems. Has it ever struck you that since the Great War, I believe, over 120 international conferences have been held in the world, like the World Economic Conference, the world this conference and the world that conference, besides the League of Nations which is functioning regularly. The vast majority of the statesmen and eminent statesmen who have attended these conferences have really tried to solve the big problems of the world, although they wanted to solve them for their selfish reasons. One of the biggest international conferences, the World Economic Conference, was held in London and in spite of efforts and arguments the problems remained unsolved and left the situation deteriorating. Why is that so? Not because of any desire to leave them unsolved but because they were functioning in a wrong way. I am not prepared to say that if these problems are not solved the world will inevitably go to the dogs, but you find that the situation in Europe is from day to day, hour to hour, worsening because these problems are not yet solved. If you ask me why they have not been solved, my answer is clear. I have no doubt—because these problems cannot be solved within the fabric of the structure of the present-day government.

Now, you cheer me, but I suspect your cheering. I suspect it, I tell you, because it is a kind of emotional display of sympathy. Well and good. Emotions are good, but it is not a matter of slogans and cheering. These problems cannot, I think, be solved by British capitalism. Socialism and capitalism are rival systems or theories in conflict with each other. Socialism is a development, if I may say so, an inevitable development of capitalism. It is not so much a question of conflict but a development from one phase to another. Capitalism plays a very important role in society. During the last century or more it has helped in adding to the wealth of the world. It has fulfilled its function and now it is becoming a terror to further progress. Therefore the next step is the question of distribution which socialism seeks to solve. Well, I am not going into this question. I may tell you that the matter came up in considering the big problems. You can solve the big problems if you understand them and if the obstructions caused by capitalism are removed. Then only you can solve them, not to the disadvantage of this or that group, but to the advantage as it should be of every group. In India you must have big problems, and the point that I wish to impress upon you is that unless those problems are solved by government they will become more and more difficult of solution, and a time will come when the problems will solve themselves either in an orderly way or in a chaotic way, and that is what

is ordinarily called a revolutionary situation. If these problems are not solved in an orderly way by those in authority in the country, then these problems will upset that authority and upset the government of the country. I have no doubt in my mind that if the problems are not solved by the British Government, then the problems will solve the British Government. I cannot conceive of the British Government solving the problems because of the present structure of the British Government. It cannot solve them without upsetting itself. There may be some kind of association between England and India but it cannot possibly be the exploitation by the former of the latter. There ought to be healthy association between England and India. These are the problems that the students should solve. They have a tremendous effect on the future of India and of England and of the British Empire directly or indirectly. Therefore it is up to you as students to understand these problems, the wider problems which affect human society, the problems which affect the political and economic framework of India as well as of the world. What is the good of your learning science and politics of the past age which has no application today? The question is of students participating in politics. It seems to me a very pertinent question because the student who does not first of all fully participate in theory is not a student. I do not call him a student. He may be reading text books and the like but he lacks the essential quality of a student. That is what is happening in the world. It is essential for him to understand political problems and for his university to provide him with the fullest facilities, not in a propagandist way, but to understand both sides of the question and leave it to him to decide how he will act. You cannot be an economist in this country unless you have some practical knowledge of conditions in India. If you go to a village and do a little research work there, as no doubt senior students do sometimes, you will get a more intimate knowledge of Indian economics than from all the text books you may read. If you go to a *mohalla* of Lucknow and try to find out the income, debts and expenses of the inhabitants of that *mohalla* you will get more intimate knowledge of the economics of life than the text books will ever give you.

So therefore it becomes necessary for you to undertake research work. You are now getting a large number of voters under the new constitution and it seems to me an extraordinary thing that every voter who is a student does not indulge in politics. He must know how to vote and for whom to vote. He must understand politics. He must indulge in politics. Therefore it is absurd to talk of students not taking part in politics. Of course it is obvious that a student so long as he is

carrying on his studies cannot disturb the course of his studies by indulging in aggressive politics. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot conceive of abnormal conditions that are going on. You have just to think whether you should carry on with your studies or whether you will enter into the sphere of political action. No rules and regulations can be made for abnormal conditions. Abnormal conditions have come throughout the world. Abnormal conditions have come to India. You cannot think of the action to be taken by all. Each individual has to decide for himself. So it is an essential part of his studies to study politics and take part in them to some extent. Now I should like to tell you that in European countries, except in the fascist countries, a large amount of time is given to the study of international problems. Serious international problems have cropped up and boys and girls are encouraged to take part in political activities. I would like you to have a big picture of the world before you so that you may see the picture of India in that larger picture. If you look at the small picture you cannot have any idea, but if you know the whole picture then you can understand it much better.

I want to take you in another direction and I want you to consider our present-day problems. Only about two weeks ago I happened to be in the north-west of India, in the Indus Valley, standing in Mohenjo Daro. I saw a big city coming out under the ground. I found a big city with double and three-storeyed houses, roofs, streets, shops etc. and I also found jewellery. That showed that there was civilization in existence then. I think this extraordinary civilization which existed in this country existed between 5,000 and 6,000 years ago, the minimum period being 5,000 years. That civilization must have taken several thousands of years to reach that stage of civilization, which was before 5,000 or 6,000 years. Now after at least 150 years or so of British rule in this country we are oppressed by that rule. We try to get rid of it—naturally so. If we look at that long stretch these 150 years become really a small thing. It becomes just a page in a big book. If you look at the world and this page you lose that sense of being enamoured of British rule. The revolutionary situation which has arisen in the world is making the strength of the British people gradually disappear. I do not say that the British people are weak. They are quite a strong people. But the strength of the British people is disappearing. The British occupy the position which Austria had in the 19th century.² Now if you take the history of the world you will find that this communal question is not a real thing. There are identical problems

2. The Hapsburg Empire was of large extent but weakened by internal dissension.

in Palestine. In Palestine there are eight separate electorates. If you look at these things you will be surprised that these questions are not Indian questions. This communal question of domination is not an Indian question. Fundamentally it becomes the question of every country dominated by imperialism; wherever there is a subject nation dominated by imperialism you find inevitably these problems coming up, because the very basis of these problems is the desire of the imperialists to dominate the country, and to split up the national unity of the country. Now I want you to understand these problems. It is the third party who is really at the back. You should take one view and you should try to get some idea of what is really important and what is not important. The Hindus believe in avatars but the real avatars are ideas in my opinion. New ideas go to bring about big changes. Today we find that these new ideas are convulsing humanity. Empires come and empires go. But my opinion is that ideas do affect empires. These new ideas come in the minds of intellectual Indian people. What is it which draws enormous numbers of these half-starved peasantry to come to listen to some speech at some conference? I think that they have some suspicion that some changes are coming which gives them hope because they are in trouble. It is because of these new ideas which bring hope to them. Many of my political friends have begun to criticise and how foolish it is that they will not listen. But we must work with the material we have got. We should work in the political field. We go about condemning our people for their ignorance. They are ignorant. They have their failings. Anyhow that is the material with which you and I have to function. What is the good of our sitting at home and criticising these people that they cannot function as they ought to. Let us fight with that material. They may be ignorant but they are, if I may say so, intellectually honest. I want you to consider from the point of view of your own education and understanding what the problems before you are. Now I just refer to one of our major failings. Take this communal question which is often argued from the point of view of percentages. You cannot consider the strength of a group or community by counting of heads. If you will go into the history of the world you will find that small numbers almost invariably have succeeded provided they are efficient. So it is absurd to consider this question from the point of view of numbers. The real thing is that if there was the question of numbers we thirty five crores of people would not have become a slave country. Thirty five crores of people are being dominated by a small number of people in Britain because they are more advanced and a more disciplined people than we are. They are abler people. Therefore the fault lies with us and not with them.

It is because British people are united and we are not. So do not bother about percentages. It does not matter how many people there are in this group or in that group. Now even many of us including myself have criticised the constitution of India, and said that people do not take their proper share in national activities. We have been set examples in Egypt and elsewhere.³

Recently I was misrepresented as having said that the students of the Punjab and Sind were a bad lot. I did not say that. But the fact remains that after all the students of India are the real future generation of India. It is what India will be tomorrow. It will be largely a matter for you to see and therefore it becomes very important to pay attention to you. We have got a few years more before us. Many have already departed one by one and ultimately the burden is bound to fall upon you. I think we have not done so badly in the last fifteen years or more. We may have failed in many ways. But I should like to say that India has done pretty well and those people who have had the privilege of doing something in shaping the destiny of India have done pretty well. There is nothing to be sorry for their activities whether they acted rightly or not. But they passed away one by one and the burden is now coming upon you. The question will be for you. Mind you, the burden is going to fall upon you sooner or later and the question will arise whether you are worthy of shouldering that burden. It is a heavy burden, and whether it is a heavy burden or light burden you cannot get rid of it. You cannot shoulder it unless you take it seriously.

3. In Egypt there was a widespread student movement at this time for the restoration of democracy and evacuation of the British troops from Cairo.

61. Industrialisation and Socialism¹

I very much like the multiplication of factories in the country. India should manufacture for all her needs in India itself, but looking to the situation in the country I do not hope that any progress will be made towards industrialisation, because several difficulties are in the way. But

1. Speech at the opening ceremony of the Hindustan Tyres Limited, Bombay, 18 August 1936. From *The Tribune*, 20 August 1936.

I warn you not to mistake industrialisation for political freedom. Several countries in the world, though prominent on the map, are economically slaves. This obviously means that there is something radically wrong in the economic system. In the U.S.A. there are hundreds of factories which have been closed down and one and a half crores of people are unemployed. There are thousands of poor and hungry, while tons of foodstuffs are being burnt and destroyed. There is food enough for those who are hungry, but they have no buying capacity. Industrialisation means money and the control of the banking system in the country. If the people in general should be benefited, industrialisation ought to be undertaken on a scientific basis. The economic system ought to be changed if that is to be achieved. The profit motive should not be there. It would be the duty of those who govern to see that the people have money in their pockets to buy what is produced. Unless that is achieved the present condition in the world will not improve. That solution is called socialism. Whether one likes it or not, there is no escape from it. That is bound to come.

62. The Example of Abdul Ghaffar Khan¹

Several ideas pass through one's mind when one has to speak on an occasion like the present one. There were several leaders in the past. In the fights for freedom that were carried on in other countries and in India also, the leaders immersed themselves in the movement so much that they became part of the movement; they lost their individuality. In India also great leaders have come and gone. In a country like India, it is not an easy matter to find men coming up and leading freedom movements. Yet India had men whose life and saying have been a source of great inspiration to the people of this generation. But they were a handful who sacrificed for the sake of their country in the past.

To awaken a people it is essential to carry on some sort of an agitation. I am sure that in spite of the opposition India will be successful in her fight to achieve her freedom. India will win her freedom not because she had a glorious past, but because the present will carry on the fight for freedom. It is essential for the people not to rest content

1. Speech on the occasion of the release of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Bombay, 23 August 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 24 August 1936.

just because they had a very glorious past, but to study the present situation in the country and the world and find out what is necessary to get the country free.

I am really sorry to note that people are wasting time by quarrelling over unnecessary and useless things like the Communal Award or the number of seats in the legislatures. The fear seems to be that one community would get a larger number of seats in the legislatures than another. I am of the view that if numbers can achieve anything the very fact that the population of India is 35 crores would have brought freedom to her.

I want my countrymen to learn the lessons of the world situation and act in the context of the international happenings. There is no doubt that political awakening of a country cannot be achieved in a day. It is left to a handful of brave people to come forward and carry on the work which would, in time, help a great deal towards the awakening of the people as a whole.

I want the people to look at the communal question from an economic point of view. The masses of both the communities are not concerned about the seats in the legislatures. What they are concerned with is, firstly, their economic freedom. They want to know how they can solve the problem of getting enough food and clothes for themselves. During my tours several poor people approached me. They were both Hindus and Muslims. They asked me a way out of several problems. Their problems are not about the communal feeling, but economic difficulties. How can they pay the money-lender? How can they feed and clothe their people? That is their problem and not the seats in the legislatures.

I am in favour of neither temples nor mosques, nor do I like those who are for destroying these. I want independence for my country and I want the people to fight for their freedom irrespective of their caste, creed or community. The common problem that is facing the country is not the communal problem which is a minor affair compared to the very great problem of achieving independence for the country to which all the communities belong. The communal leaders when asked how getting a few more seats in the legislatures would solve the problem of the masses, the problem of unemployment, the problem of poverty, they could not give me an answer.

They could not because there is no answer to give as nothing can be done through a few more seats in the legislatures to solve these problems. The communal leaders are a few. There are hundreds and hundreds of others who should seriously think about the problems that are facing the country. Can they be solved by the people fighting over

the Communal Award? Can they be solved by getting a few more seats in the legislatures for this or that community? No. Then what are the difficulties in the way of solving these problems? All these problems can be solved only when the country has freedom.

Every child in the nook and corner of the country knows Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's name. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan does not believe in speech-making. He carries on work silently. In Bombay people may have faced lathis, they may have gone to jail, but it is nothing compared to what has been done in the Frontier Province during the civil disobedience movement. The province has been organised so well and work carried on in such a splendid manner that the parliamentary work has to face a series of difficulties. The Khan Saheb is not allowed to enter not only his own province, but he cannot go even about a thousand miles nearer that—the Punjab. No province in the whole of India has done so well and worked so hard as the Frontier Province during the last six or seven years of the national struggle. This province, which was backward compared to all the other provinces only a few years ago, has gone far ahead of the others within the last six or seven years, because the people there understand what is the problem that is facing the country, and they also understand and realise how the problems can be solved. Having understood it, they have begun to take great strides.

Sixteen years ago, when the country was in a political muddle there came a great man who showed the right path to Indians to proceed towards their objective. Since then the country has taken great strides. Even in the Frontier Province, the call of this great man has been heard.

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan is a great man. I would like you to realise what is behind his greatness.

63. To Agatha Harrison¹

September 3, 1936

Dear Agatha,

I have your two letters of the 15th and the 25th.

I have not heard from Indira for some little time, since her return to England. I suppose she is settled down now in London and is busy with her preparations for her examinations.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

Yes, I rather like, or at any rate used to like, watching good cricket matches. There was a time when I took great interest in scores and averages. But that seems long ago and it is ages since I have watched a cricket match.

I am off again soon on my "hurricane" tours. It is an exhausting business and yet I find a strange relief in it from the politics of committees and individuals. I seem to feel a little nearer to reality and I suppose the enthusiasm and the crowds cheer me up.

I have just learnt by telephone that Gandhiji is seriously ill with malaria. I have no particulars yet. Malaria by itself is not uncommon or dangerous. But in his state of health it is a disconcerting business. He has been removed from his village hut to the hospital at Wardha. I am afraid I do not appreciate his living in village huts.

Yours very sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

64. On Minoo Masani's Arrest¹

I have learnt with deep regret of the arrest of Minoo Masani, a dear and valued comrade.² As is well known, the Congress policy at present is not to invite arrest or to come into conflict with the government in this way. That policy continues, but that does not mean that every person should always submit to every order that might emanate from an official of the government, however ridiculous it might be and however much it might interfere with our work.

The policy of the government seems to be to tie down our principal workers and prevent effective Congress work being done in various parts of the country. It is absurd to talk of free elections and normal political work being carried on under these circumstances. Therefore, we cannot automatically accept every order that might be passed against us. Although ordinarily there should be no disobedience of such

1. Statement to the press, Aligarh, 6 September 1936. *The Hindustan Times*, 8 September 1936.

2. M.R. Masani was arrested in Lahore on 5 September 1936 for defying the order served on him by the Punjab Government on 4 September, asking him to leave the Punjab within 24 hours.

orders, many considerations are involved, considerations of public work, of the dignity of our organization and the freedom of the individual.

When such orders are suddenly served on a Congressman, he must remember the general policy of the Congress, but at the same time he will inevitably take into consideration other matters also. The responsibility for his decision under special circumstances must rest with him. The attempt of the Punjab Government to stifle political work by arrest or interning provincial workers and preventing people from their provinces from entering the Punjab is one which must lead, unless checked, to a paralysis of political activity in the province. We cannot be parties to this and, therefore, I am glad that Masani resisted it.

65. A Roadside Interlude¹

We had had a heavy day full of meetings and processions. From Ambala we had gone to Karnal and Panipat and Sonapat and, last of all, Rohtak. The Punjab tour with all its enthusiasm and crowds was at last over. A sense of relief came over me after the long strain, and a weariness which demanded sleep from which there would be no quick awakening.

Night had fallen, and we rushed along the Rohtak-Delhi road, for we had to catch a train at Delhi that night. I could hardly keep awake. Suddenly we had to pull up, for right across the road sat a crowd of men and women, some with torches in their hands. They came to us and when they had satisfied themselves as to who we were, they told us that they had been waiting there since the afternoon. They were a hefty lot of Jats, petty zamindars most of them, and it was impossible to go on without a few words to them. We got out and sat there in the semi-darkness surrounded by a thousand or more Jat men and women.

Quami nara, said someone and a thousand throats answered lustily, three times, *Bande Mataram*. And then we had *Bharat Mata ki jai*, and other slogans.

"What was all this about," I asked them, "this *Bande Mataram* and *Bharat Mata ki jai*?"

1. 16 September 1936. First published in *Triveni*, Madras. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 44-47.

No answer. They looked at me and then at one another and seemed to feel a little uncomfortable at my questioning. I repeated my question: "What did they mean by shouting out those slogans?" Still no answer. The Congress worker in charge of that area was feeling unhappy. He volunteered to tell me all about it but I did not encourage him.

"Who was this *Mata*, whom they saluted and whose *jai* they shouted?" I persisted in questioning. Still they remained silent and puzzled. They had never been asked these strange questions. They had taken things for granted and shouted when they had been told to shout, not taking the trouble to understand. If the Congress people told them to shout, why they would do so, loudly and with vigour. It must be a good slogan. It cheered them and probably it brought dismay to their opponents.

Still I persisted in my questioning and then one person, greatly daring, said that *Mata* referred to *dharti*, the earth. The peasant mind went back to the soil, his true mother and benefactor.

"Which *dharti*," I asked further, "the *dharti* of their village area, or of the Punjab, or of the whole world?" They were troubled and perplexed by this intricate questioning, and then several voices arose together asking me to tell them all about it. They did not know and wanted to understand.

I told them what *Bharat* was and Hindustan, how this vast land stretched from Kashmir and the Himalayas in the north to Lanka in the south, how it included great provinces like the Punjab and Bengal and Bombay and Madras. How all over this great land they would find millions of peasants like themselves, with the same problems to face, much the same difficulties and burdens, and crushing poverty and misery. This vast country was Hindustan, *Bharat Mata*, for all of us who lived in it and were her children. *Bharat Mata* was not a lady, lovely and forlorn, with long tresses reaching to the ground, as sometimes shown in fanciful pictures.

Bharat Mata ki jai. Whose *jai* then did we shout? Not of that fanciful lady who did not exist. Was it then of the mountains and rivers and deserts and trees and stones of Hindustan? 'No' they answered, but they could give me no positive reply.

"Surely our *jai* is for the people who live in India, the many millions who live in her villages and cities," I told them, and the answer was pleasing to them and they felt that it was right.

"Who are these people? Surely you and the like of you. And so when you shout *Bharat Mata ki jai*, you shout your own *jai* as well as the *jai* of our brothers and sisters all over Hindustan. Remember that

Bharat Mata is you and it is your own *jai*." They listened intently and a great light seemed to dawn on their heavy peasant minds. It was a wonderful thought—that this slogan they had shouted for so long referred to them, yes to themselves, the poor Jat peasants of a village in Rohtak district. It was their *jai*. Why then let us shout it again all together and with right goodwill: *Bharat Mata ki jai*.

And so on into the darkness to Delhi city and the train, and then a long sleep.

66. This Touring Business¹

This touring business is becoming more and more difficult for me. As a tour progresses it seems to gather momentum, the crowds become vaster and vaster, and the most carefully made plans go to pieces because of the pressure of innumerable human beings. All this enthusiasm is exhilarating, one feels intoxicated by it, and for some time at least one's physical capacity increases. But there is a limit to this increase; a twelve-hour a day programme is increased to eighteen hours a day and even then it is not completed. Disappointed audiences, after waiting in vain for many hours, get irritated and their anger descends on the local organisers who are least to blame in the matter. And so, in the midst of widespread enthusiasm, sometimes a trail of unpleasantness is left behind. This can be avoided to a large extent and an attempt should be made to do so.

These difficulties are partly due to the tour programmes that are drawn up, and partly to extraneous causes. Tour programmes have been so heavy that, even apart from the physical strain involved, they are often incapable of fulfilment. A day cannot be extended beyond twenty four hours. Inevitably there are delays at every stage when one has to deal with vast crowds. Fifty thousand men and women moving in procession cannot be made to adhere strictly to a time-table. It takes time even to reach the dais of a meeting or to come away from it. To get a vast audience seated in an orderly manner is a laborious

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 16 September 1936. *The Hindu*, 20 September 1936. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 48-50.

process, unless a great deal of previous staff work has preceded the meeting. And so delay accumulates on delay.

This is the fate of the regular programme. Then there are impromptu meetings and processions which have not been provided for. Every few miles along the roadside crowds gather together and wait for hours. It is ungracious to ignore them and pass them by without stopping. So one has to stop and thank them for their affectionate welcome and say a few words to them. Often enough the villages on the route are decorated and elaborate arches are put up. At the entrance to the village or town half the population turns out and waits patiently for hours. What is one to do with all this love and affection? It is overpowering and one has to bow to it.

For various reasons I attract enormous crowds and I evoke an astonishing amount of enthusiasm. Partly this may be due to a certain personal popularity, but largely, I think, it is due to the great prestige and influence of the Congress. Whatever the reasons may be, the fact of these vast gatherings of human beings, full of enthusiasm and excitement, must be taken into account and they must be dealt with fairly and squarely.

I trust, therefore, that in future tour programmes will be drawn up after full consideration has been given to all these factors. They must be reasonable and capable of fulfilment; they must allow a sufficient margin for roadside halts and impromptu gatherings. Processions should be avoided unless they are considered absolutely necessary. A large number of small meetings should be avoided (although even these small meetings tend to become big). It is better to concentrate on a few really big gatherings and microphones and amplifiers should be provided for these. It is not humanly possible to address these vast audiences without mechanical aids.

I make these criticisms but I am full of gratitude to the Congress workers and organisers on whom the burden of fixing up my tours has fallen. They worked hard and exhausted themselves in the process, but the magnificent response of our people overwhelmed them and me. The memory of that wonderful response will remain with me and will inspire me. I am proud and happy to be connected with an organisation which, by virtue of its long service and sacrifice, has secured in such ample measure the love and confidence of millions of our countrymen.

67. To the Editor, The Leader¹

Sir,

You have done me the honour of reminding me of Napoleon in your editorial note in *The Leader* of Sept. 20.² Napoleon, in spite of his genius, does not happen to be a hero of mine, and a modest person, as you rightly characterize me, can hardly have Napoleonic ambitions. But the report of some remarks of mine, to which you give publicity, is a garbled one and, therefore, I venture to correct it. I delivered no speech but attended a private committee meeting where I took part in a discussion.³ It is not usual to publish proceedings of such meetings. But there was nothing secret in what I said. This was to the effect that from the experience of my tours and the reports received by me it was patent that the influence and prestige of the Congress among our people were enormous, and the Congress could sweep the polls. For the Congress the personal appeal of a candidate counted for far less than the national appeal of the organization and the principles for which it was fighting. That being so the individual factor should be stressed less and the principles should be given far greater importance. Even an unknown volunteer, who stood for these principles, could easily win if those principles were generally accepted by the electorate. Therefore it was up to us to lay stress on the general Congress programme and policy and not on individuals. That, indeed, was the right policy for all groups, as only thus can an electorate choose between two rival policies. To stress individual merits and not the broad policy for which the individual stands is a sign of political immaturity in a nation.

I am, etc.,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Allahabad, 20 September 1936. *The Leader*, 21 September 1936.
2. The editorial commenting on Jawaharlal's optimistic talk on the Congress winning all the seats it was contesting said: "... one of the lessons taught at school is, 'Don't be too sure.' Does this very modest protagonist of the Congress remember Napoleon Bonaparte's medals 'struck in London'?"
3. Jawaharlal had attended the Allahabad City Congress Committee meeting.

68. To Prema Kantak¹

25/9

Dear Prema Kantak,²

What an awful charge you bring against me of forgetting you each time I have met you. I am not so forgetful but when one meets people in crowds, the impressions are apt to be confused.

I am surprised to learn of the controversies that have been going on in Maharashtra over the question of women volunteering.³ What has Russia or socialism got to do with this? I am a socialist and I want to spread socialistic ideas but I do not want to mix this up with volunteering. It is right that our volunteers should be interested in this subject and we may tell them something about it if they so desire it. But to carry on aggressive propaganda would be wrong.

Then again what have questions relating to marriage and sex relations got to do with volunteering or even with socialism? In a wide sense of the word socialism is a philosophy of life and therefore it covers and includes all aspects of life. But ordinarily socialism means a certain economic theory. When I talk of it I mean that economic theory and all this talk of religion or marriage and morals in connection with it is absurd. We can certainly discuss religion or morals if we feel inclined that way but we must not confuse that discussion with socialism.

People seem to have the most extraordinary notions about religion and marriage in Russia. I wish they would find out the facts before they jump to conclusions. But apart from that, I certainly am no blind admirer of Russia and Russian ways. I approve of their basic economic policy and I think something like it will have to be adopted elsewhere. But I do not believe in our adopting all their ways or methods. We must find our own path to freedom.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-49/1936, pp. 4-5, N.M.M.L.

2. An associate of Mahatma Gandhi and organiser of the Women's National Volunteer Corps of the Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee.

3. In her letter of 22 September 1936, Prema Kantak said she was facing difficulties in enrolling women as volunteers because left-wing politicians were addressing Congress rallies and it was feared that family ties would be loosened under socialism.

All these are big questions which require long discussion. I cannot deal with them in a letter. But so far as your volunteers are concerned they do not arise. You should concentrate on volunteering.

If you so desire it, you can give publicity to this letter.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

69. To Chimanlal C. Shah¹

Allahabad
September 25, 1936

Dear Mr. Shah,

Thank you for your note on socialism which you have sent me. I have read it with great interest and found in it a very clear analysis of the situation in India. On some minor matters I may not wholly agree with you but on the whole I do agree with your interpretation. I will here only refer to one or two points. You say that I do not know exactly how socialism will be brought about in India and for the present I have pinned my faith on the constituent assembly. This is only partly true. I talk about the constituent assembly quite apart from socialism, but as an inevitable stage to it. It is the obvious culmination of our struggle for independence and for a democratic constitution. Therefore it should be the objective of all of us who believe in that independence, whether we are socialist or not. I lay stress on adult franchise so that the mass elements in India may make their weight felt and thus divert attention to mass problems—poverty, unemployment, the land question, industry etc.—from the present upper middle class problems that largely fill our minds. When we have to face these mass problems fairly and squarely I feel that inevitably we shall have to think more and more on socialist lines. As you have stated in the course of your note, the point is that the forces and groups that will work for socialism should come more and more to the front. Socialism itself will come later when political power has already come.

As for the ways and means of achieving socialism itself I do not think it is possible for us to lay down anything definitely because there

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5(a)/1936. pp. 555-57.

2. Chimanlal Chakubhai Shah (b. 1902); solicitor to Government of Bombay during the Congress ministry, 1937-39.

are so many undetermined factors in the world situation. All over the world there is an increasing crisis and inevitably the development of this crisis will affect us. We can vaguely see the direction in which this crisis is going and try to prepare ourselves ideologically and otherwise for coming events. But we must remain flexible in our thought and action, for rigidity may prevent growth. That growth must be based not only on our own objective conditions but also on the mentality and outlook of the Indian people. Therefore we have to think of principles and policies in relation to this general outlook.

The second point that I should like to make clear is about the inevitability of socialism. Now I do not believe in any such absolute determinism and I have never said it. What I have said is that as far as I can see only socialism can solve the world's problems and, therefore, I think it is highly likely to come. But there is always the possibility of a throwback and of present-day civilization killing itself. Besides, what is usually meant by saying that socialism is bound to come is that we expect people to act in a particular way under certain conditions and this will ultimately lead to socialism. For me socialism is very far from a passive waiting for things to happen.

Another thing I have often stated is that if big forces are working for socialism then the objection of some individuals will not stop it, and if these forces are not working for socialism, then all our preaching in favour of it will bear no result.

There are several other minor matters on which I should have liked to say something but I cannot write at greater length at present. On the whole your analysis seems to me, as I have stated above, an excellent one.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

70. To V.K.Krishna Menon¹

November 19, 1936

My dear Krishna,
I received your cable. Since then I have been expecting your letter. I have just heard that Katju has brought some message from you, but

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.I..

foolishly he has not sent it to me yet and this mail will go before I see it. So I cannot write to you about it.

I have just returned from another strenuous tour. One of the good things I succeeded in was to put an end, for a while at least, to a long standing dispute in Bengal.² I am off again tomorrow. This election business here is getting on my nerves. It is curious, or perhaps it is the normal state of affairs, that elections seem to bring out all the wrong things in a man.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. See *post*, section 9, item 26.

THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN II

1. To Madan Mohan Malaviya¹

Allahabad
April 20, 1936

My dear Malaviyaji,

I enclose a cutting from *The Leader* of today. I was surprised to read this as I was under the impression that we were going to have further talks as the situation developed in regard to cooperation between the Congress and the Nationalist Party. It appears that the Nationalist Party is shutting the door to any such cooperation and, as is stated, is organising itself for a straight fight as against the Congress.² This, you will no doubt agree, is an unfortunate development. I hesitate to believe that matters are being precipitated in this way by the Nationalist Party and I should like to have your views on the subject. The propaganda that is going on in the press apparently on behalf of the Nationalist Party will obviously make future accommodation more difficult. If such accommodation is desired the approach from both sides will have to be different. So far as the Congress is concerned, as some of us told you and other friends, we are prepared to go a long way to bring about this accommodation provided of course that this is based on an anti-imperialist policy and on Indian independence. The communal decision by itself cannot obviously be made the sole basis for any action as it is a by-product of the political situation. Those people who aim and work for Indian independence can have little difficulty in agreeing about the general policy to be adopted in regard to the communal decision, as inevitably such decision is opposed to both democracy and Indian freedom. Concentration on the communal decision with no clear outlook in regard to the wider political issues can have no meaning and can only result in perpetuating that very communal decision which we object to.

I should be grateful, therefore, to you if you would kindly let me know what the Nationalist Party proposes to do in regard to these wider political issues as well as the narrower issue of the communal decision. Further, whether it is true that it is making an alliance with various groups who are opposed to the very idea of Indian independence. One other matter which appears to me to have the greatest

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. At a meeting held in New Delhi on 16 April 1936, it was decided that the Nationalist Party would act as a viable opposition to the Congress with a view to contest provincial elections and to combat the Communal Award.

importance is our attitude to the suppression of civil liberties. In the past, prominent members of the Nationalist Party as well as of allied groups like the Hindu Mahasabha have not declared themselves clearly on this issue and some of them have given their active and passive support to the government policy of repression. If that is the general attitude of the Nationalist Party a common political background between it and the Congress is lacking. During the last elections the Nationalist Party supported some candidates who had actually given their adhesion to the Government of India Act as a whole and asked for cooperation with it.³ Further, among the representatives of the party and candidates there are people who, in the past, had actively supported the government policy of repression. I find from press reports that some of these gentlemen are again taking a prominent part as members or allies of the Nationalist Party. All this is very confusing and requires to be cleared up. May I beg of you, therefore, to help in clearing up the situation so that we might all know exactly where we stand. We should of course try to agree as far as possible, but even if we cannot agree let us at least know where we differ.

I shall be grateful to you if you could let me have an early answer. With regards,

Yours very sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. In the elections to the Legislative Assembly in 1934, the Nationalist Party had lent its support to candidates belonging to the Hindu Mahasabha, the Democratic Swaraj Party and the National Liberal Federation.

2. Address to the Punjab Political Conference¹

I regret that, on account of my presence, the conference has been turned into a *mela*. In the bustle and excitement that prevails it is not possible for us to consider the problems which are deliberated upon in such a conference. The question of questions is the fight for liberty. The problem of the country cannot be solved merely by speeches. We must get to real work immediately. The great need of the country and

1. Gujranwala, 30 May 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 4 June 1936.

more specially of the Punjab, because the conditions are peculiar here, is to consider the real problems. I want to give a shake to the brains and minds of the Punjabis. I am greatly affected by the fiery speeches made here. An important problem for the Punjab is the Communal Award which has been the subject of discussion before the country. Some people and especially the Muslims like it. It has also affected the Assembly elections. The Hindu Mahasabha and the Congress Nationalist Party have criticized the Congress attitude on the subject. I would like that all Congress matters should be discussed by the masses of the country. The decision should not be taken as authoritative when given only by the leaders. The success of the Congress has not been due to the leaders only but to the interest taken in the affairs by the teeming millions of the country, who have raised the position of the Congress in the eyes of the world. The Congress should, in my opinion, always hold counsel with the masses.

The Award has caused heart-burning among the Sikhs and the Hindus especially in the Punjab and Bengal. But we should remember that this is not a question peculiar to the Punjab or India alone; it is a common phenomenon all the world over. The Award has divided India into a number of communal compartments. It is clear that anyone who wants democracy or independence for the country cannot like the Award. It is a stumbling block in the way of independence. The question is how to get rid of it. Mere bewailings will not help us. We say it is a bad thing. But if we concentrate all our energies on merely decrying it, we cannot carry on our fight for independence.

That our fight for India's liberty shall be fought in the fields and factories of India and not by speeches in the councils is my view. However, the Congress work in the councils would help the struggle for freedom. The Congress election fight will not be for personalities but for principles. I will not beg you to vote but will ask you to do your duty. By merely adopting a resolution on the subject, we will not be able to improve the situation. Let a mutual agreement between different communities be arrived at. That will be the only course to attain liberty. I appeal to Sikhs and Hindus accordingly. I may not like the wording of the Congress resolution, but I agree with the basic principles on which it is based. I am sure that by mutual discussions and consideration we will be able to get over the heart-burning caused by the Award.

I am confident that the only body which has the strength and stamina to fight the British Government is the Congress. It derives its strength from the masses and not from the upper class. All forces in the country should combine to fight the government. Some higher

class people will go further from the Congress. I am not afraid of that. I want clearing of the position, so that we may know where we stand. The bright morning shall dawn and surely dawn though many of us may not live to see, as many of our dearer ones, old and young, have not been able to see and have gone to eternal rest.

3. On the Communal Award¹

During my speeches in the Punjab I have referred on several occasions to the Communal Award. Short reports, in English, of long speeches in Hindustani inevitably give a somewhat misleading idea of what I said and criticism of it is thus sometimes based on wrong data. It is always desirable that there should be clarity of ideas on controversial issues so that while we may differ, we should at least realize clearly what the issues are. I am, therefore, briefly stating here what my views are on the communal decision. I have already given expression to these views in my Lucknow Congress address, where I stated that the communal decision and democracy could never go together. Its very basis is the denial of democracy and it must inevitably be a tremendous barrier in the way of independence and the consideration of social and economic issues, which are the real problems facing us in India. I cannot conceive of anyone, thinking clearly in terms of independence or of social change, accepting or approving of the communal decision. It has been a matter of great surprise and regret to me that many of our Muslim friends and comrades, who have stood for Indian independence, should so approve of this pernicious decision.

There is no question of my being neutral or non-committal about the Award, nor, so far as I am aware, is that the Congress position. I am not in the habit of being neutral about important matters. To the communal decision I am entirely opposed and I cannot willingly accept it at any time, because to do so would be for me to forget independence and social freedom and the democratic tradition.

The question, therefore, for me is not to approve or disapprove of the Award or to remain neutral. I am not neutral and I disapprove

1. Statement to the press, Lahore, 2 June 1936. *The Tribune*, 3 June 1936.

of it strongly. It resolves itself into this: how to get rid of this most undesirable thing? I can see only two ways of doing this: the way of independence when inevitably such arrangements will have to go and give place to more democratic methods, and the way of mutual adjustment and compromise between the principal groups interested in the Award. I would add that I do not think that any real compromise is possible between those who stand for independence and those who expect to live for ever under the shadow of the British Empire. They look different ways, they work for different objects.

To expect that the British will come to our aid in this matter is to expect the impossible. It is to their manifest advantage not to do so. To expect the communal leaders to do so is equally unlikely. The only way thus is to divert the attention of the broad masses to national and economic problems which affect them much more and thus enable them to see the communal question in its true perspective. To go on laying great stress on the Communal Award defeats the very purpose we aim at for it prevents people from thinking of other issues.

The position of the Congress on the communal question has long been clear. It has declared that it stands for a national democratic solution but should there be a compromise between the parties concerned, it would probably accept it. Apart from this it lays stress on the constituent assembly for the framing of a constitution for a free India and for the decision of communal issues.

4. To Mohammad Iqbal¹

Mussoorie
June 18, 1936

Dear Sir Mohammad Iqbal,

As I was leaving Switzerland a copy of your pamphlet entitled *Islam and Ahmadism*, which you wrote in connection with some articles of mine, reached me.² I read that pamphlet with interest and it was my

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Inferring from Jawaharlal's articles that he was in sympathy with the Ahmadiya movement Iqbal said that the "eternal solidarity" of Islam could not "tolerate any rebellious group within its fold." For Jawaharlal's articles see *Selected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 468-474.

intention, at one time, to write something about it in the public press. Not of course regarding the theological points that you have touched upon, for I am neither competent enough nor interested enough to deal with them; nor regarding the controversy with Ahmadism. My interest was largely confined to the political aspects of the various questions you have touched. But heavy pressure of work prevented me from giving thought to this matter again and I doubt if it will serve any useful purpose for me to enter into this domain of controversy.

There are one or two facts, however, which I wish to clear up in a personal letter to you. I have been surprised at a certain inference you have drawn in your pamphlet to the effect that I was in any way partial to the Ahmadia movement. My articles, which were published in *The Modern Review*, drew their inspiration from the statement that you had made. And because that statement of yours dealt with the Ahmadia community inevitably I referred to it. But my whole contention was a political one as well as the political aspect of a certain theological argument that you had advanced. It had nothing to do with the Ahmadia movement as such. Indeed I knew very little about that movement except what I had read in your article and except for a vague idea that one of its fundamental creeds was loyalty to the British Government. You will appreciate that this latter fact could not possibly prejudice me in favour of the Ahmadia movement. Indeed it prejudiced me against them, so that any impression of yours to the contrary was entirely erroneous. I can never be partial to any movement which in the name of religion supports British imperialism in India.

There are many things in your pamphlet which are thought-provoking and with which I do not agree. But I do not wish to trouble you with my own ideas on these subjects. My principal object in writing this letter is to clear up the misunderstanding about the Ahmadia movement which seems to have arisen. So far as the religious or theological aspects of the question are concerned it is not for me to interfere or to discuss.

I have come to Mussoorie for a few days and I am going back to Allahabad soon.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

5. Negotiations with the Nationalist Party¹

Occasional references have been made in the public press to what have been called negotiations that were supposed to be going on between the Congress and the Nationalist Party.² Sometimes it is stated that a compromise has been reached; at other times failure is hinted at. All these press references have had little to do with the truth. As a matter of fact there have been no such formal negotiations nor has the subject been considered as between two groups out to bargain. During the past two months I have corresponded with Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya on a variety of subjects, and twice during my stay at Mussoorie I had the privilege of meeting him and discussing with him the many problems that face us. The communal decision was of course discussed but we spent far more time over other and, what I considered, more vital matters affecting our freedom struggle. These matters form the background of our whole struggle and it seems to me that clarity in regard to them is essential. The communal decision and its consequences are important but they are after all offshoots of the main problem, not the main problem itself.

Both of us started with the fixed premise that in our freedom struggle all of us should make every effort to bring together all the forces that are anti-imperialist and are working for Indian freedom. These forces are many and varied, and although temperamentally and otherwise there may be many different viewpoints among them, they have a strong common bond that unites them. It is the bond of a common political objective and common interest in achieving it.

So far as the communal decision is concerned it has undoubtedly been an element of discord amongst us. It was no doubt meant to be so. It is for us to end or at least minimise this discord for this is not based on any vital principle but on other and more superficial matters. I am sure that we can succeed in this for the whole question can now be considered more calmly and with a proper perspective. My own view on the communal decision has been given sufficient publicity. I am convinced that it is a barrier to democratic growth and national

1. Statement issued at Allahabad, 22 June 1936. *The Tribune*, 28 June 1936.

2. *The Leader* of 15 June 1936 had suggested that "rumours regarding rapprochement or at least a working agreement between the Congress and the other Nationalist Parties subscribing to the creed of independence seem to have solid foundation."

progress and ultimately it injures most those groups whom it is meant to favour. I would like all communities to recognize the undemocratic character of this decision and to object to it on this ground, whatever their other reactions to it might be. I feel that the question can ultimately be settled satisfactorily only by mutual goodwill between the communities and a spirit of accommodation, as well as a consideration of the true interests of the masses, whether Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian or others. These interests do not differ and as soon as we consider the problem from this point of view many of our present difficulties vanish.

This, I believe, is fundamentally the Congress policy. This, I think, also represents, in its essence, the outlook of the Nationalist Party. The gap between the two is more imaginary than real, and is based more on certain past incidents than on present circumstances. It would be surprising and unfortunate if it could not be bridged. There should be no great difficulty about that. But in considering this we have to consider also the wider problem. We are not out for just an electoral arrangement but for a more fundamental tackling of the problem and for this we seek a wider basis of goodwill. Friends, therefore, must not grow impatient or think in terms of failure because some magic formula is not suddenly produced. The Congress Working Committee will no doubt give its most earnest consideration to this matter. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya's earnest desire that we should all pull together is reciprocated by all concerned, and when this widespread desire is present, it is reasonable to expect that it will bear fruit.

6. To Satyapal¹

10.7.36

My dear Dr. Satyapal,

... I have noticed in the press an announcement about an anti-Communal Award conference in Lahore.² I was surprised to find that Congressmen, and even persons calling themselves socialists, are fathering this conference. The socialism that prevails amongst some

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-38/1936, pp. 159-161, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

2. The proposal to organize an anti-Communal Award conference in September 1936 was initiated by the Anti-Communal League of Amritsar.

quarters in the Punjab is of a peculiar variety. That is certainly not my variety of it...

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

7. To the Editor, The Times of India¹

July 15, 1936

Sir,

In your issue dated July 10, 1936, there appeared a letter under the heading "Pandit Nehru and Muslim Party" signed by J.D.J.² I wrote to you regarding this letter on July 11, 1936.³

In J.D.J.'s letter it was stated that he had referred the matter to Mahatma Gandhi but had received no reply from him. I am informed by Mahatma Gandhi that he has not received any letter of the kind referred to or any other communication on the subject.⁴

I am advised to take legal action in the matter. Will you kindly send me particulars of the article attributed to me to which reference is made in J.D.J.'s letter in *The Times of India*? I should like to know the name of the Punjab journal in which this appeared as well as the date of the issue of that journal.

I must also request your correspondent, J.D.J., to disclose his identity. In a matter of this kind it is only fair that the writer of the original letter should disclose his name.

Yours faithfully,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.

2. In his letter to *The Times of India*, J.D. Jenkins criticised Jawaharlal for having contributed an "offensive" article to a journal of the Punjab but made no mention of the fact that it was originally printed in 1935. Later Jenkins apologised for it. See *post*, item 11. For Jawaharlal's article see *Selected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 470-474.

3. In his letter of 11 July, which has not been printed, Jawaharlal had asked for the details of the article attributed to him.

4. Mahatma Gandhi had wired: "Received letter. Know nothing of letter in *Times*. Strongly suggest taking legal action."

8. To Mahatma Gandhi¹

15th July, 1936

My dear Bapu,

Your telegram about *The Times of India* letter came last night. I dislike getting entangled in the meshes of the law but, as you so wish it, I am sending another letter to *The Times*, a copy of which is enclosed. Further action will depend on their reply.

I am going to Karachi tomorrow. It is going to be a lengthy business. I enclose a tentative programme.

Love,

Yours affly.,
Jawaharlal

1. Maharashtra Government Records, Police Commissioner's File No. 3590/H/11.

9. To Sarat Chandra Bose¹

Camp Nawab Shah (Sind)
July 26, 1936

My dear Sarat,

I have been thinking of writing to you for a long time. Indeed I wanted to meet you but circumstances have prevented my doing so. Even now I am writing this letter under certain difficulties in a village in Sind.² I shall write rather briefly because any attempt to deal with the various matters I want to refer to you would make this letter far too long when I have little time for that now.

I wanted to know from you what exactly is the position in Bengal today in regard to Congress matters as well as the relation between the Congress and the Nationalist Party. I must confess that I am greatly confused and therefore I seek your advice.

Some days ago I read the correspondence which you had last year with Satyamurti.³ In one of your letters to Satyamurti you stated: "Is

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-6/1936, pp. 341-345, N.M.M.L.

2. Jawaharlal toured Sind from 18 to 27 July 1936.

3. This correspondence was published in *Advance* (Calcutta), 26 June 1936.

it not a fact that during the last five years or more there has been a regular conspiracy in higher Congress circles to put down Bengal? I may tell you frankly that I do not at all regret that Bengal does not count in all-India politics today. All-India politics during the last five years or more has been too dirty for words and in a sense I am glad that Bengal does not count there."⁴

I read this statement with considerable pain. As you know during these past five or more years to which you refer there have been civil disobedience movements and most of us were in prison or interned for the greater part of the period. This period with its record of struggle and suffering is a fine record for the whole of India and Bengal's part in that struggle and suffering has been outstanding. Is it fair, therefore, to describe this entire period in the terms you have done? If by all-India politics you refer to the Working Committee, this Committee could not even meet for a great part of this period. When it did meet it had to face enormous difficulties and pressure from government repression, but did it, during that period, do anything unfair to Bengal? The successive Presidents may have erred from time to time, may have weakened, but I do not know how the question of Bengal was treated in an unfair way. It was treated, if you like, in a helpless way. Perhaps you refer to the last two years since the withdrawal of the civil disobedience movement. Much has happened during that period with which I disagree. But is it not strong language to call it too dirty for words? I really do not know what conspiracy there has been in higher Congress circles to put Bengal down. There may have been individual prejudices and partialities but so far as I know there was a very powerful desire to keep Bengal in the forefront because Bengal had suffered so much. But circumstances including the terrible repression of Bengal as well as party feelings in Bengal made it difficult to take any effective action.

But I want your advice specially regarding the present position. You know my views regarding office acceptance and the like. I disagree entirely on that issue with many of my colleagues who represent perhaps the majority in the Congress today. My views on the Communal Award have also been given sufficient publicity. I think that the Communal Award is a hateful thing which can never be accepted. But with all this I do not understand the position of the Nationalist Party in Bengal. This party taken as a whole in India includes in its members many people who are not even Congressmen and who are politically exceedingly moderate. This does not apply to a great extent

4. Letter dated 1 September 1935.

to the Bengal Nationalist Party but it does apply to the Punjab. In the Punjab the Nationalists have made almost common cause with extreme reactionaries and communalists. I do not understand how many Congressmen in Bengal who have always been in the forward ranks of the Congress could ally themselves in any way with these reactionary elements in other parts of the country, which openly oppose the Congress on a variety of fronts. In the Punjab Nationalists talk of a common front with Hindu ministers and the like. Is this not a fatal step for any Congressman to take?

I can fully understand and appreciate the resentment of Congressmen in Bengal against the Communal Award. In my own way I have been stressing this point and you will notice that the Working Committee has gone a long way to make its opposition to the Award clear.⁵ I hope that in the manifesto that the A.I.C.C. will issue there will be a further elucidation of this issue, so that the position of the Congress in regard to the Communal Award will be made as clear as possible and will not be essentially different in so far as principles are concerned from the opposition of other people to the Award.

What exactly does the proposal to come to terms with the Nationalist Party mean? It seems to me that it resolves itself ultimately to a division of seats for the election. I do not see how the Congress as an organisation can enter into any pact with the Nationalist Party on that score. In Bengal, I suppose, if there was no Nationalist Party as such there would be no difficulty in a proper allocation of seats to people including the present members of the Nationalist Party because in Bengal the Nationalist Party consists of Congressmen. But in the Punjab and in the C.P. this means watering down the Congress policy by allowing reactionary and moderate elements to have the support of the Congress.

Suppose that the Congress had taken up a clearer and stiffer attitude in regard to the Communal Award two years back, what would have been the result? Probably the occasion would not have arisen for the formation of the Nationalist Party in Bengal. Now however a kind of vested interest seems to have been created in northern India in regard to the Nationalist Party and quite apart from the Award and our attitude towards it that vested interest demands its share in the spoils or else proposes to combat the Congress. That seems to me a very unfortunate state of affairs which inevitably will do injury to all concerned.

5. Jawaharlal made two statements on 2 and 22 June (see *ante*, items 3 and 5) which were endorsed by the Working Committee on 29 June 1936.

Take the resolution which the Nationalist Party in Bengal passed a fortnight or so ago regretting that the Working Committee had postponed a definite decision regarding an arrangement with the Nationalist Party. This resolution seems to have misunderstood the whole situation. There was no question of postponing. Indeed the Working Committee declaration practically met the demands made upon it regarding the Communal Award. The only other step was a question of sharing seats. Further the Nationalist Party went on to state that they must organise themselves to combat the Congress Parliamentary Party as well as other forces.

For the present I am considering the question from the narrow point of view as it affects the Nationalist Party of Bengal. There are, of course, many important considerations to be taken into account also as the proposed action of the Nationalist Party puts the advanced wing of the Congress and the rest of India in an exceedingly difficult and invidious position. It strengthens the moderate element in the Congress and the country and thus ultimately adds to the government strength. The position in the Punjab is also worthy of consideration. But I shall not write to you much about this now. There the advanced elements are still further weakened by such tactics. There is in the Punjab today a definite tendency towards the left amongst the Mussalmans. There are even forces among them who do not look upon the Communal Award with great favour and are beginning to take a politically democratic and reasonable view. How are we to encourage them and thus not only weaken the supporters of the Award but increase the strength of the advanced wing in the Congress?

As regards the Communal Award I have already expressed myself clearly. I should like the Congress to give expression equally strongly to this viewpoint but I should also like it to emphasise the fact that we want to settle this question in cooperation with other groups. Any other attitude is obviously not desirable and only leads to increasing the supporters of the Award in other groups and consequent perpetuation of that Award.

I have given you above some indications of how my mind is working. I wish you would write to me and let me know how you view the situation. I should like to come to Bengal myself and discuss this with you and other friends. Indeed I would have come like a shot if I had felt at any time that my coming was worthwhile. I said as much to the Bengal delegates at the Lucknow Congress but they told me that I should not come yet but should wait for a better opportunity. Please write to me to Allahabad where I hope to reach on the 4th August.

Just before I left Allahabad I sent two books to Subhas. I do not know if he received them.

Yours very sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

10. To Suresh Chandra Majumdar¹

August 6, 1936

Dear Comrade,²

I thank you for your letter of the 18th July which I received on my return from my Punjab tour.

It seems to me that there is a considerable misapprehension on the subject and most of us are arguing about words rather than principles or policies.³ Perhaps this is largely due to certain past occurrences which have confused the issue. I am personally at a certain disadvantage in this matter as I was absent, either in prison or abroad, during this period of controversy and dispute. But there is also a certain advantage in this position as I can view the situation unaffected by past controversy.

I think it will serve little purpose for me to go back and discuss this past history, regrettable in some respects as it is. The point is where do we stand today. On this issue it is perfectly clear what the Congress position is today. There is not the slightest ambiguity. I ventured to define this in a statement issued in Lahore in June last and later in a further statement issued from Allahabad.⁴ This was not a mere expression of my personal views. (I had expressed my personal views on the communal decision a year earlier in writing my *Autobiography*.) In my statements I had endeavoured to give expression to the official Congress viewpoint. Leading Nationalist opponents of

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-6/1936, pp. 347-349, N.M.M.L.

2. (1888-1954); secretary, Bengal P.C.C. at this time; general secretary and treasurer, Rabindra Bharati Society; founder of *Hindusthan Standard*, *Ananda Bazar Patrika* and *Desh*; member, Constituent Assembly, 1947-50 and of Rajya Sabha, 1952-54.

3. The Bengal Congress Committee had resolved on 12 July 1936 that the attitude of the Congress ought to be "one of clear and unequivocal rejection of the communal decision of the British Government."

4. See *ante*, items 3 and 5.

the communal decision told me at the time these statements were issued that they were perfectly satisfied with the viewpoint laid down therein and with the unqualified condemnation of the communal decision. But, they added, it was not enough that I should say so; the Working Committee should confirm what I had said. In saying what I had said I knew I was expressing the views of the Working Committee. But to avoid any doubt on the matter I placed my statements before the Committee and they declared that these statements of mine clearly enunciated the Congress policy in regard to the communal decision.

I really fail to see after this the point of the criticisms of the Working Committee which you make or which some Bengal papers make. Your argument seems to me to be beside the point. You are perfectly correct in stating that when the Lucknow Congress rejects the new constitution, *ipso facto*, it rejects the communal decision. Of course it does. I would even go further and say that even apart from this general rejection of the new Act and the constitution, the Congress would reject the communal decision as being opposed to all principles of democratic progress and as being aimed at breaking up the unity of India.

Therefore the question of rejecting the communal decision does not arise at present. All of us, or nearly all of us, in the Congress want to reject and, what is more, put an end to this communal decision. The sole question to be considered is how to bring this about. The Congress is of opinion that the right policy is, on the one hand, to push on our fight for independence and, on the other, to seek some common measure of agreement for the removal or substantial alteration of the Award. Any other policy only confirms this Award for it is obvious that it is to the manifest advantage of British imperialism to hang on to it.

I shall repeat, to prevent any possibility of doubt, the Congress policy in regard to the Award. It dislikes it, does not accept it and rejects it and can never reconcile itself to it, because it is a barrier to our progress to unity, freedom and independence, and is a part and parcel of British imperialism which it combats. But from the very nature of the circumstances which have given rise to this Award, it is clear that it cannot be got rid of except, as I have stated above, on the basis of independence or near-independence, or a compromise solution between substantial parts of the major groups affected. The policy to be pursued must therefore be such as to lead to these results.

Obviously any weakening of the Congress front is fatal from this or any other point of view. And I think it is obvious that the formation

of a separate group, sometimes in conflict with the Congress, must lead to this weakening. The adoption of tactics such as memorialising the government for a modification of the communal decision is not only at variance with long established Congress policy but inevitably weakens us in our fight for independence.⁵ It means the joining together with various individuals and groups which have no desire for independence or even oppose it.

We all know how hard Bengal has been hit by the communal decision. But the question has to be tackled on an all-India basis. Looking at it from this basis we find the Nationalist Party, outside Bengal, to consist of many persons who have nothing to do with the Congress. Some of them have been and are active opponents of the Congress in the fight for independence. Does this not lower the whole plane of our struggle? I can hardly believe that Bengal Congressmen with their splendid record can allow themselves to be exploited in this way by other forces in India.

I can assure you that the Working Committee, far from turning a deaf ear to Bengal's difficulty, is keenly alive to it and is eager and anxious to do everything in its power to solve it. I can further assure you that the members of the Working Committee have as great a dislike of the communal decision as anyone in Bengal. But the wider aspects to the problem demand attention even for the solution of this issue.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

5. A memorial on behalf of the Hindus of Bengal was submitted to the Secretary of State on 26 June 1936.

11. To J. D. Jenkins¹

Allahabad
8.8.36

Dear Sir,

I have received your two letters dated July 18th and 24th. Owing to my absence on tour I could not deal with them earlier. I note that

1. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.

you express your regret for the expressions you used in your letter to *The Times of India*, the reason for this apparently being that I wrote the article a year ago in prison. It is a fact that I wrote the article in prison a year ago. It was published first in *The Modern Review* and many periodicals reproduced it soon after. From the copy of the article which you have sent me it appears that *The People* of Lahore reprinted it on the 24th November 1935, that is, eight and a half months ago. This fact was before you when you wrote to *The Times of India* and yet there is no reference whatever to it. The whole trend and purport of your letter to *The Times* is that you were criticising some recent article of mine.

My article was written, as is apparent, with reference to a statement issued by Sir Mohammad Iqbal. It was partly addressed to him and he was good enough to issue a lengthy and very courteous reply which has subsequently appeared in pamphlet form. In that reply no objection was raised by him to the matter or manner of my article. Nor to my knowledge has anyone, besides you, raised such an objection.

This is the article which you have seen fit to characterise, knowing that it was written last year, as "most dangerous", "wholly improper", "most offensive", "disgraceful", "amazing", "full of falsehoods", and "an absurd effusion". You have charged me with deliberately going out of my way to wound Muslim feelings and thereby create extreme bitterness between one community and another. And you have invited government to take action against me.

I do not know if it is a habit of yours to fling about these epithets and charges, but to me it seems to be a very serious matter, which ignorance of an odd fact or two in no way justifies. Apart from the personal aspect of it, it must inevitably result in creating that very bitterness between communities which you seem to deprecate. And it is not creditable journalism. Your private and personal expression of regret, without in any way withdrawing publicly the expressions you have used, is highly unsatisfactory. I suggest that it is up to you to give public expression to your apology and to withdraw the remarks you have made.

Yours faithfully,
Jawaharlal Nehru

12. To Sarat Chandra Bose¹

August 14, 1936

My dear Sarat,

Thank you for your letter which I received today on my return to Allahabad.² I should like to reply to it at some length but I cannot do so at present owing to rush of work.

I think you are unjust to the Congress Working Committee and that you have drawn wrong inferences from what they have done or not done. I can assure you that there is not the faintest idea in their minds of setting one group against the other. The one thing they have aimed at, rather helplessly it is true, is to bring various groups together if possible.

I do not know exactly what you mean by Krishna Das's³ spying mission. He was sent on no mission at all much less a spying one and certainly the Working Committee knew nothing about it. He wrote a very stupid letter off his own bat....

About Hijli also I do not know what you object to.⁴ As far as I remember we made strong references to it and the Working Committee passed a resolution which was approved of by some representatives of Bengal who were present. It was with the approval of the Working Committee and at their desire that I went to Bengal soon after, knowing full well that my going there might result, as it did, in my imprisonment.⁵

You are quite right in saying that the Nationalist Party in Bengal consists of Congressmen only. But this party is a part of a larger Nationalist Party which does not consist of Congressmen only and which is carrying on, in some places, a violent campaign against the Congress.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-6/1936, p. 409, N.M.M.L. Extracts.
2. In his letter of 11 August, Sarat Bose alleged that the Working Committee had set up "one group against the other in the Bengal Congress" with a view to secure support "to the formation of ministries under the new constitution and to the Working Committee's formula of 'non-acceptance and non-rejection'" of the Communal Award.
3. Secretary to Mahatma Gandhi, 1921-22; author of *Seven Months with Mahatma Gandhi*. He was charged at this time with reporting on Congress politics in Bengal.
4. On 16 September 1931 two detenus died and twenty were wounded as a result of firing by the jail staff at Hijli detenu camp in Bengal. The Working Committee passed a resolution on 29 October 1931 recording its sense of "deep sorrow at the tragedy." See *Selected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 256.
5. Jawaharlal was arrested on 26 December 1931, soon after his return from Bengal.

I want to come to Bengal soon. It would suit me better if I could come in the third week of September. At present I am engaged up to the 31st August and then, after 4 days interval, up to the 14th September. These tours and intensive work I have to do here in the office are a bit of a strain and I am at present a little below par. But it is impossible to get any rest, physical or mental. We have to face a difficult and complicated situation all over India and unless we can pull together all of us are likely to suffer for it.

I had a note from Subhas the other day telling me that he had received the books I had sent him.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

13. Congress Attitude to the Communal Award¹

The Congress attitude to the Communal Award has been dealt with in the manifesto at more length than it really deserves.² The Working Committee gave lengthy arguments in support of its attitude that it will be wrong to continue one-sided agitation against the Award as it will defeat the very object, wherefor the agitation is proposed. I think, and you will agree with me, that the attitude of the Working Committee on this subject has been made perfectly and absolutely clear. The Working Committee has been convinced that the only two alternatives to the Award are either gaining independence by national strength or mutual agreement.

By mutual agreement I do not mean an agreement of all groups and classes as it is exceedingly difficult to get all groups and classes to agree to a common solution, particularly so because of vested interests. What the Working Committee means by an agreed solution is mutual agreement of major communities. The Committee opposes one community

1. Statement at the A.I.C.C. meeting, Bombay, 22 August 1936. From *The Tribune*, 23 August 1936.

2. The Congress election manifesto of 22 August 1936 declared that "the attitude of Congress is, therefore, not one of indifference or neutrality. It disapproves strongly of the communal decision and would like to end it." See *post*, section 8, item 2.

agitating against another as that would put the government in a happy position. In the opinion of the Working Committee such one-sided agitation would divert the attention of the country from political and economic demands. Individuals have always freedom to express their opinion on the Award, but not in such a way as to encourage or carry on an agitation against one group.

By mutual agreement I do not mean that all communal leaders should agree, but I mean that the persons whom the Committee has in mind are those who stand for the political and social progress of the country and not those who are moved by communal considerations. My recent tour of the Punjab has shown me that the masses are not much worried about these communal wranglings. What they really care for is political, economic and social freedom. If the people begin to feel on these lines I think we shall succeed in arriving at a mutual settlement.

14. To Sarat Chandra Bose¹

September 3, 1936

My dear Sarat,

I wrote to you a few lines from Cawnpore. I hope that this letter will catch you in Calcutta before you leave for Simla.

As you have not so far informed me of the date when I shall go to Bengal, I have fixed up my Madras tour for the first half of October.

Thank you for your letter about your joining the Working Committee. I shall make an announcement about it in another day or two.

I do feel that you have passed judgment on the Congress Working Committee without having all the facts before you. I can speak with direct personal knowledge of the last six months and am quite sure that there was not the least desire on the part of the Committee to elbow out any person because of his views on office acceptance or the communal decision.² This matter was entrusted entirely to Rajendra Babu and surely there is no person in India who is more honest and fair in his dealings than Rajendra Babu. I wonder if you have any idea of the vast numbers of the letters and telegrams which have

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-6/1936, pp. 281-283, N.M.M.L.

2. This allegation was made by Sarat Bose in his letter of 27 August 1936.

poured in on us from all manner of people in Bengal during the last few months. No other subject has taken up so much time and consideration.

As regards Krishna Das and his letter, the Working Committee, when it came to know of it, was excessively put out. So was Gandhiji. They did not quite know what to do about it. The letter, as you know, was never received by Gandhiji or anyone else. And Krishna Das, when asked about it, said that he had no copy. He was not sent to Bengal to report on any matter but as a busy-body and a very emotional person he wrote something without really knowing the facts. Personally I think that his mind was not all there. As you know he was discharged from his position in the A.I.C.C. office.

Of course it is absurd to compare Bardoli with Bengal.³ Who has ventured to do so? The only suitable comparison would be the North West Frontier Province. But will you tell me exactly what you think the Working Committee could have done in the matter? Three years ago I was in Calcutta and I put this very question to people there and I had no answer. Except for passing resolutions, which the Committee did, it could not take any other steps.

I regret to notice in this morning's papers that the Nationalist Party proposes to set up candidates in opposition to the Congress and to concentrate on an agitation about the communal decision.⁴ I think this is very unfortunate and the party has ignored the larger issues before the country. The Congress position, as declared in the manifesto, is clear enough. Ideologically there is no difference between the Congress and the Nationalist Party. The difference comes in in regard to the stress to be laid on the various aspects of our national problem and the activities to be undertaken. The Congress holds that final stress must always be laid on the question of independence and not on any other issue which, though important, must inevitably distract attention from the real objective. Any big scale organised agitation against the communal decision at this stage will inevitably divert attention from the vast political and economic questions that face India and the world today. It is obvious that the British Government will only yield to considerable pressure. Our job is to organise that pressure. That pressure can only come effectively on the political plane.

3. Sarat Bose had blamed the Working Committee for its "inaction" in regard to the happenings at Midnapore, Chittagong and other places in Bengal before which, he said, "the happenings at Bardoli pale into insignificance."

4. The Nationalist Party passed a resolution on 30 August 1936 calling upon its branches to set up candidates for the coming elections.

So far as the communal decision is concerned the Congress has used the strongest language in condemning it. Whenever occasion arises it will repeat this condemnation, as a group and individually. Ordinarily if this matter comes up in the legislature or otherwise it will be the duty of the Congress to express that condemnation by vote but obviously one cannot bind down any political party to vote in a particular way unless one knows how the matter comes up. But if an organisation has a clear opinion on a subject voting follows that opinion. It may be necessary to move amendments or to face the situation in some other way. But the general background of the Congress attitude is quite clear.

I must confess to you that my mind is full of the vast upheavals that are taking place in the world today, of the tragic conflict in Spain and of the inevitable effect of all this on India. We dare not forget these major facts of the world situation. We must look at our own problems in true perspective and the only true perspective is the anti-imperialist one.

I do not quite understand how the B.P.C.C. can further the cause we all have at heart by trying to represent at the same time the Congress and the Nationalist Party. That can only create confusion in Bengal and all over the country and lead to the weakening of the Congress organisation.

I am leaving Allahabad for a tour in the U.P. day after tomorrow.

Yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

15. To the Secretary, Bengal P. C. C.¹

Sept. 5, 1936

Dear Comrade,

I have noticed in the newspapers the report of the proceedings of your executive council held on September 2nd. In this report it appears that your council passed a number of resolutions, or one resolution with several clauses, in regard to the communal decision and the

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-24(i)/1936, pp. 189-191, N.M.M.L.

Congress manifesto's reference to it.² This resolution interprets the Congress manifesto in a way which hardly seems to be justified. But apart from this interpretation it seems to declare unequivocally that the Bengal P.C.C. is going to carry on an organised agitation inside and outside the legislatures against the communal decision. Further it calls upon all subordinate committees to do likewise.

It seems to me that parts of this resolution are directly opposed to the spirit and letter of the Congress manifesto as unanimously adopted by the All India Congress Committee. You will agree with me that this would lead the Bengal P.C.C. to a course of activity which the A.I.C.C. has stated in the clearest language as undesirable and harmful both in the larger interest as well as from the point of view of combating the communal decision. This matter thus raises grave and important issues. Quite apart from the merits of the problem there is another aspect which we must necessarily bear in mind. That aspect is the unity of Congress policy in the country and the willing carrying out by provincial organisations of the decisions of the All India Congress Committee. Obviously if this fundamental axiom is not accepted, all organisational unity disappears and the Congress becomes a loose federation of mutually conflicting groups. That certainly is not the idea underlying the Congress constitution and indeed no organisation can long survive or function effectively if this kind of thing happens.

The matter is too important for me as Congress President or as a member of the Congress executive to take any action on my own initiative, but the Working Committee and, it may be, the All India Congress Committee will have to consider it in all its aspects. It affects intensely all our Congress work in the coming elections to provincial legislatures. Presumably your provincial parliamentary board will desire to run candidates on the basis of these resolutions of your executive. That basis is not the basis which the All India Congress Committee has laid down and hence a conflict arises as to who should stand for election and what policy he should represent. It will be for the Congress Working Committee or the A.I.C.C. to resolve this conflict.

It appears that the Nationalist Party has passed certain resolutions to contest elections and even to oppose Congress candidates. From

2. On 2 September 1936 the Bengal P.C.C. welcomed the rejection of the Communal Award in the Congress election manifesto but added that this did not mean a ban on Congress organisations agitating against the Award. It called upon all Congressmen to fight against the Award in and outside the legislatures.

your executive council's resolution it would appear that your council's views are more in conformity with those of the Nationalist Party than of the A.I.C.C. This Nationalist Party is an all-India organisation which includes in its fold, in many provinces, people who are either not Congressmen or those who have opposed the Congress on many occasions. Thus your resolution may lead to a position where you may have to side with a non-Congress organisation and oppose the Congress policy and activities as a whole.

One thing more I should like to point out to you. Your executive council has passed this vital and important resolution and given it publicity without any previous reference to us on the subject. A decision of this kind involving the possibility of conflict and confusion within the Congress organisation is of a far-reaching character and before that decision is taken do you not think that it was due to us and to the Congress organisation as a whole to confer with us and try to find some way out of the difficulty that confronts you?

This matter will be placed before the next meeting of the Working Committee and if necessary of the A.I.C.C. I shall be glad therefore if you will kindly send me a full statement on the subject which I can circulate to the members of the Working Committee as well as the president and the secretary of the Central Parliamentary Board. With a view to keep the members of the Working Committee informed, I am sending a copy of this letter to them.

In view of the importance of this question I intend visiting Bengal before the matter comes up before the Working Committee. Towards the end of this month I am going to Madras. Would it suit you if I visit Bengal in the third or fourth week of October? To begin with I should like to go there on a short visit to consult with friends and colleagues, but later I may undertake a more extensive tour of your province.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

16. To Master Tara Singh¹

September 16, 1936

My dear Master Tara Singh,
I hasten to reply to your letter of the 10th which I have just received on my return from tour.

Your questions about the Congress attitude in regard to the communal decision are not quite clear and they seem to overlap.² I shall endeavour, however, to give below what I consider to be the Congress policy in this regard.

The Congress manifesto has made it as clear as possible that the Congress is entirely opposed to the communal decision and wants to end it as soon as it possibly can. There can be no dispute or discussion about this policy or about the desire of the Congress to be rid of the communal decision. How to do so is a matter for us to consider and our methods may vary as the situation develops. It may be necessary under different circumstances to stress one aspect of our struggle. Under different circumstances a different stress may be needed. For instance the governing factor of the situation in the world today is the rapid drive to international war which will inevitably affect India tremendously. It may produce world chaos. How are we to face this tremendous situation, if it arises, is a problem which all of us have to consider even today, for tomorrow may be too late. When such vital problems arise, smaller problems, however important, cannot be stressed. On the national plane the vital question for us is the fight for independence and the first stress must inevitably be laid upon it. To emphasize other matters is to play into the hands of the imperialist government and to make people think that our object is not independence but a change in the proportion of the representation in the legislatures or the manner of elections.

There can be no doubt that the communal decision is a barrier to our progress to independence and democratic freedom as well as to the

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5(KW)(ii)/1936, pp. 375-376, N.M.M.L.

2. In his letter of 10 September 1936, Tara Singh asked: "1. Will the Congress nominees in the legislatures vote against the so-called Communal Award, if such an occasion arises? 2. If not, will the Congress nominees be free to vote against the so-called Communal Award if they think necessary? 3. Shall each individual Congress nominee be free to vote against the so-called Communal Award?"

unity of India. That is the principal reason why we oppose it. And yet if we seek to change it, it means that we accept the framework of the British system and only want a change within that framework. It is for this reason that the general Congress policy has been to stress the wider and more vital issue which includes all other minor issues. To express an opinion about the communal decision and to denounce it as utterly bad is perfectly correct from the Congress viewpoint. But to make the public think that the communal issue is a primary issue today leads to a diversion of interests along wrong lines, to a misapprehension on the part of the public on the vital national and international issues that face us. It is because of this that the Congress has deprecated one-sided agitation against it which is bound to lead to a rival agitation in its favour. This is the background of the Congress policy.

A situation may well arise when the Congress may consider the time and circumstances appropriate for a vigorous attack on the communal decision as such. But such an attack must not obscure the issue of independence, and must not lead to rival agitations for and against it which will necessarily result in the British Government being in the favoured position of continuing the communal decision.

The Congress has laid down its general policy in regard to the communal decision; its subsequent action will necessarily be governed by that policy. That is to say, that whenever the question of the communal decision arises in the legislatures or outside, the Congress members ordinarily must express their disapproval of the communal decision by vote or otherwise. This follows from the general policy laid down. But it is difficult to say how the question will come up in the legislatures and what the general position will be then. It may be necessary, for instance, to move amendments to express the Congress attitude. In any event the Congress member can do nothing in the legislatures which can give rise to the impression that he is neutral on this question. For that would be wrong.

Thus I cannot say how and when the matter will come up definitely and how the Congress members will vote. That will depend on the circumstances. But ordinarily their voting will be, as a consequence of the Congress policy, against the communal decision. In a special case the matter will have to be decided at the time. In any event the Congress party will hold together and vote together on important matters.

I hope I have made the Congress position clear.

I appreciate fully and sympathise with the Sikh attitude towards the communal decision.³ I would beg of you however to consider the national and international problems which surround us and threaten to engulf us. We have to take the larger view and keep this in mind and shape our policy accordingly. We have grown out of the stage when we agitated for changes within the imperialist structure. It is that structure itself that has to go now and when it goes it will take all other evils which it has produced with it. The real question for us to consider is: Do we think in terms of Indian independence or in terms of fitting ourselves into the British imperialist structure?

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. At the National Sikh Conference held at Amritsar in March 1935, the Sikhs expressed their protest against the Communal Award as being wholly unjust to them and resolved to make all possible sacrifices to get the communal decision scrapped.

17. To Syed Mahmud¹

Allahabad
September 24, 1936

My dear Mahmud,

I am glad you have drawn my attention to the controversy and agitation that has been going on for some time past over the Hindi-Urdu question.² I had heard of this controversy but owing to numerous other preoccupations I could not pay much attention to it. Even now, I am afraid, I am unable to get excited about it and it seems to me to be an unreal affair in a world which is in torment and which has to face vast problems affecting the whole future of our country, of the millions who inhabit it, and of civilisation itself. I must conclude that those who are excited over this Hindi-Urdu affair have little conception of these larger and more vital problems. They seem to have lost sight of the wood and concentrate their attention on a few odd trees.

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, File No. XI/36, National Archives of India.
2. The controversy on an all-India language had intensified from 1935. The advocates of Hindi wanted Hindi written in Devanagari script to be the common language while the supporters of Urdu wanted Urdu to be recognised as the official language in either script. The controversy took a communal colour.

My own way of looking at our problems is very different. The vital factor in the world is the fierce tussle that is going on between progress and reaction. Everywhere we see this in different forms and guises — in Spain, in Palestine, in India. What is happening in Spain today is probably of more consequence to the world, and even to India, than anything else. I am oppressed by the attempts on the part of British imperialism to crush the Palestine Arabs. All these, as well as our freedom struggle in India, are parts of the same picture for me. And when I see this mighty picture, ever shifting and changing, many of the little things that worry us seem to lose significance.

Coming to India, the vital factor is the problem of poverty and unemployment. All else is subsidiary to it and can only be considered in relation to it. This is my way of looking at things and I think it is the right way. But I find this perspective strangely lacking in most other people, especially in those who talk and write so much about Hindi and Urdu. Languages and literatures and cultures flourish when people flourish and have freedom to develop their genius. To the starving and the wretched and the slaves, what value has a superficial culture which does not reach them?

It is from this viewpoint that I would like our friends to view this question.

I have another difficulty. I find that many people are considering this question not dispassionately or in a scholarly spirit but with minds full of suspicion and prejudice. They are out to find fault, to impute motives, to cast aspersions, to smell conspiracies. I understand that my good faith has been suspected in this matter. Indeed this was a reason why I hesitated to say anything; for if my good faith is questioned what I say can count for little. But what people think of me in this connection is after all of relatively little moment. It sinks into insignificance when I consider that Gandhiji's *bona fides* have been attacked fiercely and he has been accused of deep conspiracy to crush Urdu.³ This is an astounding fact to me for, if there is anything I hold by, it is the absolute good faith and straightness of Gandhiji in all matters. You know that I differ from him in many things and I have often given expression to my difference in outlook, but that has nothing to do with my belief in the tremendous sincerity of the man and his enormous services to our cause. Curiously enough, he has done more,

3. Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal and others had been criticised in the Urdu press for attending the session of the Bharatiya Sahitya Parishad at Nagpur in April 1936.

I think, than anyone else to help in evolving the mentality for a common language in India. Both in the Congress and outside, the recognition that Hindustani must be the common linguistic link in India is largely the outcome of his efforts. And yet it is this man who is accused by petty people of the very thing which he has sought with all his might to avert.

However I shall not discuss personalities any further. The question we have to consider has nothing to do with individuals except in so far as we have to understand the background of what is happening. First of all let us be clear as to what the Congress, that is to say nationalist India, stands for. In our constitution it is clearly stated that the language of the country and of the Congress is Hindustani. It is further stated that both the scripts, Nagari and Urdu, are to be officially recognised. Further in the fundamental rights resolution of the Karachi Congress it is stated that "the culture, language and scripts of the minorities and of the different linguistic areas shall be protected."

Now this is as clear as it could well be. The position thus is this: We think that the principal languages of India, each of which is an ancient language and has a considerable literature, should be encouraged in their various linguistic areas. They should be the principal languages for those areas. These languages are, apart from Hindustani and its variations, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Oriya, Assamese, Sindhi etc. There is no question of any of these languages being suppressed by Hindustani. For over a large area however in the north, Hindustani, with its variations, holds sway. We have to try to standardise this Hindustani as far as we can for this northern area, and at the same time to make it a necessary second language for the rest of India, so as to make it the linguistic link which binds India together. There is no other possible language which can be this link and I think it is quite inevitable that Hindustani should develop in this direction. I am not against English or other foreign languages. I think a knowledge of foreign languages is essential for us to keep in touch with the world and with modern thought. But that knowledge can never extend to large numbers of people in the country.

And thus Hindustani is going to be the national language of India. At the present moment there are many variations of it. We talk usually in terms of Urdu and Hindi, thinking chiefly of the script and partly of the background of Persian or Sanskrit. But an even more vital difference is that between the city language and that of the rural areas. We seldom think of the rural areas in this connection because all our public life derives inspiration from city folks. To some extent this is

bound to continue and it is right that the higher cultural standard of the city should play an important part. But as education spreads in the rural areas this predominance of the city will not be so marked and our language will undergo a considerable change. It may not remain so polished and so courtly but it will gain in vitality and power of expression.

The real standardisation of language will only come when there is mass education on behalf of the state. Our efforts today in this direction cannot carry us far except in so far as they create a certain atmosphere. There is another factor to be borne in mind. People often object to a certain growing tendency for the Hindi and Urdu versions to drift apart. There is, I think, some tendency of this kind and some individuals help it. But the real reason for this, I think, has nothing to do with individual motives. It has a more fundamental basis.

When we talk of the common simple language of the people, which we would wish to encourage at the cost of the Persianised or Sanskritised language, what exactly do we mean? Every tyro knows that there is a world of difference between the language of Delhi and the language of Nagpur or of Bihar. There is a tremendous difference between the language of Lucknow city and the rural areas of Lucknow. What then is this simple common language of the people? Each one of us is apt to consider his own language or the language of his group the standard language and to be irritated when another variation of the language is used. Instead of being a little ashamed of his ignorance or of his limited knowledge, he seems to glory in the fact that he does not understand something.

But I want to point out something deeper. The simple common language of the people is always a limited language. Probably it consists of about two thousand words. It is good enough for the day to day activities of ordinary life. But as soon as we begin to discuss any problem of life, political, cultural, economic, social, this simple language does not help us. We have to go outside its range to discover the requisite words and phrases to express uncommon ideas. Inevitably the writer or the speaker has recourse to Persianised or Sanskritised words. Thus apparently the two variations of the language drift apart. This is really a sign of the vitality of the language and we need not alarm ourselves about it. I am sure that after this first flush of separate growth they will come nearer to each other because they cannot help it. Circumstances are too strong for them and a mass audience will demand both simplicity and uniformity. It is up to us to help in this process wherever we can and I think we can do something in that direction now. But we must not waste our efforts in objecting to this growth

of the language even though that growth may exhibit separatist tendencies. We want a rich and varied language drawing for its sustenance and its vitality from the classical languages as well as the modern languages of the world. In the modern sense of the word our languages are somewhat immature and they have to develop before they can express modern ideas and fine shades of modern thought. So the richer they get the better. We must not try to stop the growth of the languages because of our own limited knowledge. The real thing to be objected to is the tendency both in Hindi and Urdu for a certain courtly and elaborate method of expression which, though grandiloquent, has little vitality and can never reach the masses. If we think and speak and write in terms of the masses, inevitably our speech and writing will tend to simplicity and force. This is the way to check the extravagant conceits as well as the separatist tendencies of Urdu and Hindi.

I do not say much about the script because that is a matter that is settled so far as we are concerned. For Hindustani both the Nagari and the Urdu scripts must be encouraged and recognised everywhere. This is not merely a political compromise, as perhaps some people think, but a vital principle to encourage national growth. I would personally encourage every language and every script that exists because I am convinced that real education can only be given to the growing child in the home language and script. I find it quite absurd when I learn that people want to suppress a language or script anywhere. That shows utter ignorance of national growth and the part that language plays in it. I would remind you of how the Russians have solved this problem in their own vast and varied territories. They have encouraged every single local language and they have even gone so far as to manufacture a new script for certain nomadic languages which had no script so far. The result of this has been a wonderful growth of education all over the Soviet territories. I would go so far as to permit the adopting, by the state schools, of the Tamil or any other language in any city in northern India where a sufficient number of Tamil boys and girls require this. So also with all other languages and scripts. Our policy must be not to suppress any language or script but to encourage it so far as we can. Applying this to Hindustani it inevitably follows that we must encourage both the Nagari and the Urdu scripts all over the Hindustani speaking areas. To try to suppress any of them in any way is wrong and harmful. Further, in the non-Hindustani speaking areas, the state, I think, should undertake the teaching of either the Hindi script or the Urdu wherever a sufficient number of people demand it.

With this background to my thought it astonishes and grieves me to find that in the North West Frontier Province the Hindi script should be discouraged by the state. In your province, Bihar, I understand that some people object to facilities being given to the Urdu script by the state. That seems to me an utterly wrong attitude. We must throw the way open to both these scripts everywhere and permit the use of either or both as the people choose.

It is curious how many things in our country take a communal tinge. Even the language question has become communal. And, for some mysterious reasons, Urdu is supposed to be the hall-mark of the Muslims. With all due deference, I am not prepared to admit this. I consider Urdu as my language which I have spoken from my childhood up. Unfortunately for myself my education was such that I know neither Urdu nor Hindi properly. But that does not mean that Urdu ceases to be my language. I consider this question, therefore, and I want others to consider it, entirely from a linguistic point of view and not from a communal viewpoint. To talk about culture and Muslim culture in this connection is to talk beside the point.

When we consider the question of a common language for India we must bear one important fact in mind, that a common language cannot be a hotch-potch of all the languages of India. We cannot create an artificial language like this and impose it on the whole of India. That will fail as Esperanto and Volapuk failed.⁴ The question as to what Hindustani is cannot be determined by a reference to the non-Hindustani speaking areas of India, such as south India. We can only fix upon Hindustani by considering northern India and by trying to evolve a common tongue out of the variations of Hindi and Urdu. Any attempt to influence this evolution by mixing up the consideration of other languages in India is doomed to failure.

Keeping this well in mind we can at the same time try to find the common words and links between this standardised Hindustani of the north and the other principal languages of India. This will be helpful in the study of Hindustani in other parts of India. I tried to point out the essential difference between these two methods of approach at Nagpur during the sessions of the Bharatiya Sahitya Parishad, but I am afraid I did not succeed in making myself clear.⁵ Many people there were far too full of other problems which seemed to me superficial.

4. These were two attempts at developing international languages.

5. The full text of the speech is not available.

Apart from these remarks of mine at the Parishad at Nagpur I did not say much else so far as I remember, as I felt somewhat out of place in the gathering and out of touch with its various constituent elements. It was the first time that I had attended such a gathering. My chief interest in it was that it should develop links between the different literatures of India so that common ideas might course through them and they should begin to look more and more to the masses of our people. I wanted our writers in the various languages to consider the many problems the European writers have to face today, and I hoped that the Parishad would develop into some such association. But I found to my regret that discussions ranged round trivial matters such as Hindi and Hindustani and odd words here and there. My own sympathy was for the use of the word Hindustani and I mentioned this, but I felt ill at ease when I found that this question so dominated everything else. That conference had a large number of people from south India representing the southern languages. They were suspicious of the attempts made on behalf of Hindustani to overshadow them. In spite of that suspicion they came. Inevitably their approach to Hindustani was to a large extent through Sanskrit which was a common link. They could vaguely think in terms of Hindi but the word Hindustani seemed much more foreign to them. This was, I believe, felt by Gandhiji and he made it clear that he would like the southern writers to accept the word Hindustani but they would require some further contacts with us before they would gladly do so. Therefore, he said, for the present the uncouth phrase "Hindi *yani* Hindustani"⁶ be used. His intention was to win over, as far as he could, these reluctant and suspicious writers from the south and the west to the ideal of Hindustani as a common language for India, and he took the most feasible course that was open to him. But in doing so he made it perfectly clear that he did not give in on any point of principle, for to him Hindi itself meant the use of both the scripts and both variations of the language. He made this clear subsequently, I am told, at the meeting of the Sahitya Sammelan.⁷

Thus in considering this Nagpur Parishad one must bear in mind that it was not a meeting of Hindi and Urdu writers from the Hindustani speaking areas but a gathering in which people from the south and the west predominated and their views had to be considered and respected.

6. Hindi, that is, Hindustani.

7. Held at Nagpur in April 1936.

This letter has grown most terribly long and I am afraid it is rather scrappy. I have dictated it in some haste and I may not have expressed myself as clearly as I might have done. But it will, at any rate, give you some idea of how I feel in this matter. If you so desire it, I shall further elucidate any further aspect of this question. But one thing more. This talk of Muslim culture and Hindu culture in this connection astonishes me. It betrays an amazing ignorance of modern conditions and modern forces. Perhaps you have read what I have written in my *Autobiography* on the subject. Previous to that I addressed a few questions to Sir Mohammad Iqbal on this subject of culture.⁸ I have yet had no answer to my questions and I shall be glad if you or someone else will supply me with that answer. I feel that there is a tremendous amount of loose thinking on these subjects. This must not be encouraged.

There are various national cultures and many of these have been influenced by religions. But essentially they have remained national cultures. In the course of time each national culture has influenced its neighbouring cultures and thus we find today mixed cultures in most countries. India has a very powerful national culture but it has been influenced by equally powerful influences of other cultures. I refuse to consider these separate trends as Hindu or Muslim. They are essentially parts of our common heritage and today they are being influenced by cultural or other tendencies which flow from the scientific civilization of the West. All the king's horses and all the king's men cannot stop the development of the forces which tend to unity in India, politically, economically and culturally. Indeed this tendency is a world-wide one. We are developing, in spite of wars and conflicts, a world culture which will not crush or standardise national cultures, but which will connect them together with common links, and yet retain their infinite variety. In India our object must inevitably be the making of a united nation, politically and otherwise, with strong cultural bonds and at the same time with the fullest tolerance for the development of cultural variations. Indeed these variations must be encouraged and helped. We do not want a drab uniformity in India but a wide and varied life bubbling over with rich vitality. Beyond this we must work for the common world culture and world order, which is the only way out for the present disorder and chaos all over the world.

There is one matter which is worth noting, why is it that whenever such so-called cultural and similar questions are pushed to the front, political reactionaries take the lead in them? Is that not a significant

8. See *Selected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 468-474.

thing which ought to make us think hard? Out of political reaction there can never be cultural progress. If there is any person really keen on cultural growth in India he must also be keen on the political freedom of India and work for it to the best of his ability.

With apologies for the length of this letter,

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

18. To Mahadeva Desai¹

September 24, 1936

My dear Mahadeva,

You will remember that I told you and Bapu that the Urdu press was full of Hindi-Urdu controversy and there had been many attacks on Bapu. I have no time to keep in touch with the Urdu press. But I have found lately that there is a great deal of ferment on this question and many people are excited over it. I found a reference to this in some of the addresses presented to me by Muslim organisations. At Mahmud's suggestion I have written a letter to him on this subject. It has been hastily dictated. But still it may help a little in clearing the atmosphere. I enclose a copy for you. You can show it to Bapu when he has the time.

Very probably I shall spend a few hours at Wardha on the 3rd or 4th on my way to Madras.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

19. To Sarat Chandra Bose¹

September 26, 1936

Dear Comrade,

... For the present I do not propose to reply to your letter² in any detail. Much of it is concerned with matters on which we all agree. We are all of one mind, I hope, about the communal decision and we want to get rid of it. Where a certain difference comes in is in the present tactics to be adopted to gain this end. What these tactics (in the best sense of the word) should be is a matter for careful consideration. But it is clear that whatever action we take might be, it will fail of its purpose if it is a disunited action. That surely is the essence of working through an organisation.

I do not for the moment consider the merits of the question. These were considered at length at the Bombay Working Committee and A.I.C.C. meetings at which, unfortunately, you were not present. After full consideration, the statement was adopted practically unanimously by both the Committees. This statement seemed to be clear enough on all the points involved. Even if there was some doubt as to its interpretation, it was for all of us to consider it afresh and, if necessary, reinterpret it. You will agree with me, I hope, that those who drafted it and who ultimately passed it have a certain right to be heard in regard to its interpretation. I was therefore surprised to find that the Bengal P.C.C. council put a certain interpretation to it which, to my thinking and that of many of our colleagues, was wholly unjustified. I put it to you that a little consideration was due to us in the matter and we might have been told of your views and interpretation before any such decision was arrived at by your P.C.C. Curiously enough your P.C.C. has not yet sent our office a copy of the resolution passed on the 2nd September regarding the communal decision. We have received this, for the first time, together with your letter under reply. I had to proceed on the basis of newspaper reports which are not always reliable. I would beg of you to impress upon your office to be in closer touch with us and send their resolutions as soon as they are passed.

The real question before us, as I view it, is the stress we have to lay on this matter. We are drifting in India, as in the rest of the world, to a period of grave crisis and upheaval. We have to face this in a united and disciplined manner on the basis of independence. There is a grave danger in this foundation being weakened if we lay special

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-24(i)/1936, pp. 143-145, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

2. Dated 19 September 1936.

stress on any other issue including such an important issue as the communal decision. After all what does the demand for a change in this decision amount to? It means our bringing pressure on the British Government to alter it within the framework of the present constitution, certainly within the framework of British imperialism. That is a dangerous line to adopt, for inevitably it changes the emphasis from independence to something far short of it. Independence inevitably includes the ending of the communal decision with all its unhappy offshoots. An agitation for the removal of the communal decision does not and cannot include the wider political issue. Our national movement has passed beyond the stage of emphasizing, to any great extent, any issue other than independence. We may of course emphasize this issue as a part of our fight for independence. But we have to see that this emphasis does not tone down that real demand and does not weaken our anti-imperialist front. It is this wider issue that I would like you and your committee to consider, and, in particular, I would like you to bear in mind continuously the great crisis that threatens us in the near future....

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

20. To Jagat Narain Lal¹

Allahabad
30-9-36

Dear Babu Jagat Narain Lal,²

I have your letter of Sept. 24.³ I am replying in some haste as I am pressed for time. The Congress has declared as clearly as possible that it is wholly opposed to the communal decision and seeks to end it.

1. *The Leader*, 31 October 1936.
2. (1896-1966); member of the Bihar Nationalist Party at this time; a freedom fighter; went to jail several times; general secretary, All India Hindu Mahasabha, 1925-35; parliamentary secretary, Bihar Government, 1937-39; deputy speaker, Bihar Assembly, 1952-57; Minister for Law, Cooperation and Animal Husbandry in Bihar, 1957-61.
3. Jagat Narain Lal had requested Jawaharlal for a "clear statement" on the attitude of the Congress to the Communal Award.

Indeed, it must end it if it thinks or acts in terms of independence. That being the policy of the Congress, whenever this subject comes up for consideration inside the legislature or outside it, the expression of opinion or other action to be taken must necessarily be in conformity with that policy. Thus ordinarily when a vote is to be given it must be against the communal decision. The Congress cannot take up a neutral or non-committal attitude on this matter.

At the same time it must be borne in mind that an organization cannot bind itself down to vote in a particular way without knowing the exact form of the proposition and the circumstances that exist at the time. The principle of trying to get rid of the communal decision will, of course, remain and will govern Congress policy. Thus Congress members might prefer to move an adjournment to a proposition in order to explain their attitude more clearly. If there is a big national or international crisis at the time this might also have to be taken into consideration.

As regards the question of leading an agitation against the Award, the Congress holds, firstly, that the primary consideration for us should always be the issue of independence. Everything should be judged from that point of view. Independence, of course, includes the removal of the Award and many other objectionable things. The Congress wishes to avoid any activity which diverts attention from the main issue to other matters. Such other matters which fit in with the larger issue can of course always be pressed. The Communal Award issue can, of course, fit in, in an agitational sense, with this main issue. When it so fits in, then there is no question that it should be pressed with all vigour. When owing to various factors it does not so fit in, a special agitation based on it will injure the larger cause by making it appear that we are really thinking in terms of changes within the framework of the new Act, that is, of British imperialism.

Secondly, the agitation would depend on the internal situation. It may be that an agitation, say, carried on in the main by Hindus leads to a rival agitation in favour of the Award carried on in the main by Muslims. This results in creating a situation in favour of the retention of the Award for such a conflict is inevitably exploited by the British Government against us. Therefore, the idea of a one-sided agitation is not favoured by the Congress. It wants to create an atmosphere on the basis of independence which will help in the solution of this problem. This need not mean that all the communal leaders of various groups must agree and embrace each other before anything can be done. That is a highly unlikely contingency. But it does mean that those who think in terms of political freedom and economic issues,

to whatever groups they may belong, will be able to see this communal decision in the true perspective and will join hands in fighting it.

At the present moment the Congress feels that for both the reasons mentioned above, it is undesirable to raise special attention in regard to the Award though, of course, our disapproval of and opposition to it must be proclaimed, as the Congress manifesto has done and as many of us have done as individuals. But it is quite possible that this may arise when the Congress feels that it should press this issue. In coming to a decision the two points mentioned above will have to be taken into consideration.

Thus the real question for consideration is not one of principle but one of the methods to be employed to give effect to that principle. The Congress feels that its line of approach to this question is likely to yield the best results. Another matter which perhaps separates the Congress from some others is the vital importance it attaches to independence.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

21. To Syed Mahmud¹

5-10-36

My dear Mahmud,

I expected to see you before I left Allahabad but there was no sign of you. Among other things I wanted to talk to you about that letter I wrote to you on the Hindi-Urdu controversy.² I gave a copy of this to Ashraf³ and he gave it to the Associated Press which apparently issued a summary to the press. I think the full letter should appear in some papers—*The Bombay Chronicle* etc. as well as Urdu papers. I think you ought also to write on the subject. The attitude that Abdul Haq⁴ has taken up and his propaganda are highly misleading and offensive and I am surprised that you and others should quietly submit to

1. Syed Mahmud Papers, N.M.M.L.

2. See *ante*, item 17.

3. K.M. Ashraf (1903-1962); historian of medieval India; secretary, political and economic department of the A.I.C.C., 1936-38; expelled from the A.I.C.C. for communist sympathies in 1945.

4. (1870-1961); Urdu scholar and editor of *The Standard English-Urdu Dictionary*.

this kind of thing. Is it our fate that always the reactionary Muslims should take the lead in everything and the nationalists should follow in their wake like dumb-driven cattle? That has been the case often enough in the past. Is it going to continue? I hope not. It is about time that on this issue as on others a little aggressive spirit should be displayed by those who call themselves nationalist and advanced. This talk of separate Muslim parties also must not be encouraged.

I write in haste in the moving train. At every station there are vast crowds.

Love,

Yours affly.,
Jawahar

22. Address to the Hindi Prachar Sabha, Madras¹

I have followed with great interest the work of the Hindi Prachar Sabha in Madras. I have also felt great joy in seeing the rapid progress made in the spread of Hindi in south India in such a short time. Such a great development is due to the people's passion for Hindi and also the efficiency of the *pracharaks*. People ask me why I do not devote attention to Hindi propaganda. The reason is not that I do not take an interest in it, but because I have concentrated all my efforts on politics. Several things have to be done in this country, and it is but right that some should specially devote their energies to the furtherance of the Hindi movement.

There is no conflict between Hindi and other Indian languages. Learning of the mother tongue and acquiring proficiency in it need not be subordinated to Hindi. Hindi is the common language in India, and is essential for inter-provincial and national purposes. It is the language that would keep India together and unify the nation. Hindi is already spoken by two-thirds of the population in this country; and it is the duty of the rest to learn it. It is not difficult to learn three or four languages and all these languages can certainly co-exist. In Europe everyone has to learn at least three languages. Even in a small country like Switzerland three languages are spoken. The spread of Hindi would solve the language problem in the country.

1. 7 October 1936. From *The Hindu*, 7 October 1936.

There is not much distinction between Hindi and Urdu. The script no doubt is different; but in essentials the language is the same. I consider the recent controversy in regard to this as needless and sedulously carried on by communalist leaders. After all, both Urdu and Hindi or Hindustani are Indian languages, and no community, Muslim or Hindu, can deem it as their own property. It is the common heritage of the country. Let us not quarrel over this matter. Personally I would prefer the term Hindustani to Hindi.

23. To S A. Brelvi¹

Camp Madura
October 12, 1936

My dear Brelvi,

Your letter of the 5th has only just reached me.² I do not agree with you about the responsibility for the Hindi-Urdu controversy. You accuse the Parishad as well as some prominent Congressmen. I do not think either are fundamentally to blame, though the Parishad made a number of errors without any special evil intent. Will you tell me the names of Congressmen who have offended in this connection and the occasion when they have done so? It seems to me that the one person really responsible for this controversy is Abdul Haq. I have been astonished to learn the length to which he has gone. I have been still more astonished to find that nobody has effectively protested against this and not only falsehoods are allowed to pass but his offensive imperinences are allowed to pass unchallenged. I can only conclude that most people, in connection with this matter or similar matters, are in a pathological condition and unable to think and act clearly. I have no use for the political reactionaries posing as champions of this culture or that.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. In his letter of 5 October Brelvi wrote that the Hindi-Urdu controversy would not have arisen if apart from the decisions of the Parishad some "prominent Congressmen" had not propagated Hindi instead of Hindustani.

24. On the Bombay Riots¹

This renewal of communal rioting in Bombay² must force every sensitive and thinking individual in the land to consider this problem in its deeper aspects. It is sad to have deaths and broken heads but what is infinitely worse is the brutality and vulgarity of the whole thing. If this brutality is to be associated with the name of religion in India, then no decent person would like to associate himself with that religion. It is about time that all people, to whatever community or religious group they belong, made up their minds that they would, on no account, tolerate such brutality, inhumanity and violence by whatever group committed. We must have courage to condemn utterly even our own co-religionists. There has been far too much toleration in the past. Some pious sentiments have been expressed condemning individual acts but on the whole there has been a background almost of approval. It is because of this background that the evil elements in society exploit the name of religion. I suppose that the Bombay riots will ultimately end because such things cannot go on. But the memory of these will not end soon and if our men of religion do not attempt to eradicate this background of toleration for a brutal, indecent and vulgar hooliganism then indeed it is clear that our men of religion have had their day, and other decent elements in society will come to the front.

1. Interview to the press, Vijayawada, 19 October 1936. *The Hindu*, 20 October 1936.
2. There was communal rioting for five days in Bombay from 15 October on the question of construction of an assembly hall within the precincts of a temple near a mosque.

25. Address to the Arya Samajists¹

It is up to the Arya Samajists to cooperate with the premier national institution, but the Congress cannot bind itself to any conditions.

While bigger issues are shelved in the background petty problems are being magnified to the detriment of the country's progress.

1. Bareilly, 24 November 1936. From *The Hindustan Times*, 25 November, 1936.



TOURING SOUTHERN INDIA, OCTOBER 1936



ON THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

I wonder how people in India can worry about sectarian problems of civilization and culture when hunger and poverty are staring the nation in the face.²

It is an imperative necessity to relieve all this which vitally affect the country before people can apply themselves to any minor issues.

You should be straight and realistic and not waste time and energy over extraneous matters.

2. In their welcome address the Arya Samajists had asked Jawaharlal as to what safeguards the Congress would provide for protection of "Aryan civilization and culture".

26. To Habib-ur-Rahman¹

25th November, 1936

Dear Maulana Saheb,²

I have just seen a statement of yours in *The National Call* in which you express your displeasure at my attitude to the Communal Award. You state that I have fallen a victim to the Hindu Mahasabha leaders. I shall be grateful if you will explain your statement a little more as I value your opinion and would like to know what your grievance is.

I am writing this in a train as I am touring at present and therefore I cannot say much. But I wish to point out to you some facts which may clear up the position somewhat. I expressed my opinion on the Communal Award first nearly two years ago, long before I had met or discussed this with anyone. I was in prison then and I wrote it in my *Autobiography*. This can be found in the published book. This was on the lines of my various subsequent statements on the subject, and the A.I.C.C. election manifesto issued two months ago from Bombay is in conformity with it. The recent resolution of the Bengal P.C.C. repeats the A.I.C.C. manifesto and contains nothing new.

The gist of this opinion is that the Communal Award is bad from the point of view of the unity of India and our struggle for freedom.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-17/1936, p. 17, N.M.M.L.
2. (1892-1956); founder of the Ahrar Party, 1929, one of the strongest nationalist Muslim organisations in India; president, Majlis-e-Ahrar, Punjab, at this time.

This has little to do with the weightage of any special community or group. I am not much concerned with this. But I do view with apprehension the splitting up of India into separate communal groups and thus preventing the consideration of economic problems which affect all of us. I do not think that the Communal Award is compatible with independence. I think that it injures the Muslim masses as much as others. The only persons it really touches are a few upper class people. I think therefore that inevitably it will have to go if we are to consider the wider economic issues affecting the masses.

But I am equally sure that it should only go by an agreed settlement between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. Therefore any one-sided agitation against it is wrong and injurious. When an opportunity offers itself, an attempt should be made for this agreed settlement. I think that as economic issues are becoming more important, this agreed settlement will not be difficult.

This is, as I understand it, the Congress position. I shall be glad if you will kindly let me know where you differ from it.

Kindly send your reply to Allahabad which I hope to reach on December 2nd.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

27. To Habib-ur-Rahman¹

13/12/1936

Dear Maulana Saheb,

I have received your letter of the 8th on my return from Bombay.²

I should like this question of the Communal Award to be cleared up for I find that the misunderstanding continues. I am not concerned for the moment with what the Hindu Mahasabha or the Nationalist Party say in regard to it. What I am concerned with is the Congress position.

The Congress position is that the Award is undemocratic and that it comes in the way of our independence. It splits up India into numerous

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-17/1936, pp. 1-3, N.M.M.L.

2. Habib-ur-Rahman in his reply accused the Congress of supporting the Hindu Mahasabha, and blamed Jawaharlal for the change in the Congress attitude.

parts. It prevents the proper consideration of the real problems of poverty and unemployment. It is not so much a question of Muslims getting this or not getting that. Quite apart from Hindus and Muslims, the communal decision gives a separate compartment to numerous other groups, such as Europeans, and this splitting up prevents national and economic growth. It is quite conceivable that Muslims should retain their special protection and yet the whole basis of the Award might be changed. For both Hindus and Muslims suffer under the Award.

This is the theoretical position of the Congress in regard to the Award. But believing this it also believes that a change should only be made by agreement between the main groups concerned. Any attempt to force a change against the wishes of a group will not solve the problem.

Thus in theory the Congress is completely opposed to the Award and whenever its opinion is asked it must give it. It is not and cannot be neutral in opinion. But it does not wish to take any step without agreement. If the matter is brought up in the Assembly and their opinion is asked, Congress members must inevitably give it against the Award but they will add that it must be changed by agreement. Any other position seems to me inconsistent for Hindus or Muslims or any who believe in independence.

The Ahrars stand for the independence of India. Believing this, can they approve of the Communal Award? They cannot but they must say that they object to change being forced without their agreement or consent. The Ahrars further, I trust, stand for the masses. If so, do they consider that the Award does anything at all for the Muslim masses?

I am interested in two things: political independence and the removal of the burdens from our masses. I am not interested in Hindus or Muslims as such. I am quite convinced that the Communal Award is a bar to both these things that I am interested in. If so, I cannot but condemn it and I should like to know how anyone who wants independence or the economic freedom of the masses can accept the Award. It applies only to a handful of the upper classes. Where do the masses and their problems come in?

I am sorry if some Muslims cannot think in terms of independence and the economic freedom of the masses. Would you have me give up independence or the masses because of that?

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

CIVIL LIBERTIES

1. To Subhas Chandra Bose¹

26.3.36

My dear Subhas,

I returned from Delhi today and found your letter² of the 13th from Badgastein awaiting me here.

In Delhi we had of course learnt of the British consul's letter to you through a Reuter message. It had come as a shock to us all and I was so angry and upset that I spent a bad night. I suppose you know that there was an adjournment motion³ in the Assembly which was passed by a majority of three votes—Jinnah and some of his colleagues remaining bravely neutral.

Your letter has put me in a difficulty. All my personal reaction to such orders and warnings is to go against them. And yet I was not quite prepared to advise you to return immediately. I should have liked to consult other people but there were none about and I knew you would be expecting a reply from me. So I cabled to you today to postpone your departure pending further developments. It is sad that you will not be present at the Lucknow Congress. I was so looking forward to it.

Obviously this kind of thing cannot be endured for long—perhaps we have endured it too long already. You cannot submit to indefinite exile. In such matters, however, your personal inclination must count for most. For the present we shall see how matters shape themselves at Lucknow and immediately after.

I enclose a few draft resolutions⁴ which the Working Committee has recommended to the subjects committee. The Working Committee meets again on the 7th at Lucknow to consider further resolutions.

Love,

Yours affectionately,
Jawahar

1. U.P. Government, Intelligence Department, Special Branch Records.
2. In his letter of 13 March 1936, Subhas Bose sought Jawaharlal's advice whether he should return to India against the warning of the government.
3. The motion to censure the government for its decision to arrest Subhas Bose was passed on 23 March 1936.
4. Not printed.

2. Message to The Bombay Chronicle¹

A charter of slavery is no law for the slave. The slave who would be free can only tear it up and fashion for himself a new charter of freedom. Between the two there is nothing in common, the gulf that separates them cannot be bridged.

1. Allahabad, 27 March 1936. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 12 April 1936.

3. To Subhas Chandra Bose¹

Allahabad
30.3.36

My dear Subhas,

Four days ago I sent you a cable advising postponement of departure. But I was greatly worried about it and felt that I had done wrong. I consulted Gandhiji and other friends in Lucknow and therefore sent another cable² to you (one copy to Vienna, the other to Badgastein) suggesting your immediate return. I hope you received these cables. I am anxiously waiting to have news of you. Probably you might be starting back soon and this letter might not reach you. But still I am taking my chance. There is just the odd possibility of your not having received my cables. I am quite clear in my own mind that you must come back now.

Yours affly.,
Jawaharlal

1. U.P. Government, Intelligence Department, Special Branch Records.
2. On 27 March Jawaharlal had cabled: "Consulted colleagues. We think your immediate return desirable."

4. On the Arrest of Subhas Chandra Bose¹

The arrest of such persons makes us feel intensely about our present political state. Such a state of affairs cannot continue for long if repression of this kind is to continue. I had met Subhas Babu only two or three days before he started for India, and both of us, who had not been in touch with the Congress politics and situation here for a long time, discussed the political situation and possible methods of continuing the struggle.

After the letter of the Secretary of State informing him not to enter India if he valued his liberty was conveyed to him, Subhas Babu cabled to me asking my advice as to what he should do. At first I cabled to him asking him not to precipitate things by immediately starting for India, but later, after consultation with friends, I felt that it was essential that this indignation should not be pocketed. I again cabled him asking him to come back to India in spite of the order. Those cables possibly did not influence his decision to return as Subhas Babu had started before the cables could have reached him.

1. Lucknow, 9 April 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 10 April 1936. This speech was made at the subjects committee after a resolution on Bose's arrest had been passed.

5. All-India Protest Day¹

It has been suggested that a special day should be fixed for the all-India expression of our indignation and resentment against the arrest and detention of Mr. Subhas Bose. I gladly commend this suggestion to all Congressmen and others, and fix Sunday, May 10, for this purpose, when public meetings should be held all over the country, and resolutions passed on Mr. Subhas Bose's arrest conveying the greetings of the people to our comrade.

Subhas Babu's arrest is one of the latest and most significant instances of the widespread and intensive suppression of civil liberties in India. It is desirable, therefore, that this wider aspect is also stressed, and the

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 22 April 1936. *The Hindu*, 23 April 1936.

resolution passed by the Lucknow Congress on the suppression of civil liberties should be placed before the public and endorsed by them at all public meetings.

It will be remembered that the question of protecting civil liberty is one that affects all Indians, whatever political or other party or group that they might belong to or whether they belong to none. It is not a matter that affects Congressmen only. Therefore, on this question, we should invite the cooperation of all who believe in civil liberty and endeavour to build up a joint front on this issue.

6. Circular on Civil Liberties¹

I am taking the liberty of addressing you on the subject of the suppression of civil liberties in India. This suppression has been progressively getting more widespread and intensive and has now become the normal feature of the administration. As has been pointed out, at no time since the revolt of 1857 have civil liberties in India been suppressed to the extent they are today. It is manifest that real political life, and even social and personal life, are very seriously interfered with by this suppression. Various political and other organisations have protested against this from time to time and it would be desirable for them to cooperate on this issue, even though they might differ on others, so that a joint fight might be put up on this vital question.

The existence of civil liberties is generally considered to be essential for the development of every kind of national activity—political, cultural, social and economic. With their suppression all these activities suffer. In countries with a democratic background the greatest value is therefore attached to civil liberty and people of the most diverse and mutually hostile opinions join together in a common attempt to protect this foundation of all liberty and activity. They consider it their duty to resist even the suppression of any opinion or activity to which they are personally opposed, for once the principle of such suppression is admitted it can be, and frequently has been, extended to all manner of other activities. In America, England and France powerful civil liberties unions, of a purely non-party character, have been established to resist all such encroachments and their activities have borne substantial

1. Allahabad, 22 April 1936. *The Hindu*, 28 April 1936. This was addressed to prominent individuals of all parties and some editors of newspapers.

fruit. In India the necessity for such a joint effort embracing all groups and individuals, who believe in civil liberties, is obviously even more necessary than elsewhere.

It is proposed, therefore, to start an Indian civil liberties union, the sole function of which will be the protection of civil liberties in all departments of national activity. It should be open to all individuals who believe in this fundamental proposition and it should avoid any entanglement of any other political or economic issues. Such a union could have a national council with a wholetime secretary, as well as local committees wherever possible. The first object of this union would be to collect data and give publicity to it. Other activities such as the organisation of public opinion to resist all encroachments on civil liberties would follow.

I am addressing this letter to some friends who are not connected with the Congress organisation and I trust that it will be possible to build up, with their help and cooperation, a non-party and non-sectarian union of the kind I have outlined above. The exact form that such a union might take and its future activities would naturally depend on the views of those interested in this subject who join it.

I hope that I may count on your cooperation in this important national work. Politicians and those who dabble in public work are naturally interested in this; equally so are educationists, lawyers and professional men, authors and journalists, printers and publishers, social reformers and those who work for the betterment of the peasantry and the industrial workers.

Could you kindly favour me with your views on this subject?

Jawaharlal Nehru

7. To Ronald Kidd¹

Allahabad

April 22, 1936

Dear Mr. Kidd,²

I shall be obliged to you if you could kindly send me by air mail the constitution and rules of your National Council for Civil Liberties.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. F.D-9/1936-37, p. 81, N.M.M.L.

2. Secretary, National Council for Civil Liberties, London.

We are trying to form a similar council for India and it will help us to have your rules for reference.

When I was in London you will remember that we discussed the possibility of having some kind of a conference in London under your auspices and in collaboration with other organisations on Indian civil liberties. I wonder if this idea has at all taken shape. The position here in India in regard to civil liberties continues to be the same, that is to say, all the repressive apparatus is in full play. We would welcome any activity on your behalf to bring this home to the British public.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

8. To Tej Bahadur Sapru¹

Allahabad
May 9, 1936

My dear Tej Bahadurji,

Thank you for your letter of the 1st May which I have read carefully.

Your objections to joining the proposed civil liberties union are two:

1. It would be easier to get the restrictions on civil liberties removed if the Congress, as well as possibly some others, changed their methods; and 2. That though a non-party union is theoretically possible there is bound to be conflict in the approach to certain questions.

As regards 1, it is obvious that questions of civil liberties only arise when there is a conflict between the public, or certain sections of it, and the executive government. If there was an acquiescence in, or a submission after verbal protest to, the policy and activities of a government, there would be little question of suppressing civil liberties. Only when the opposition to the government becomes felt by that government does the tendency to suppress it take shape. Every government tends to resent forcible criticism and opposition, and a democracy can only function properly if public opinion constantly checks government and prevents it from becoming too autocratic. In India where there

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. The letter was later published on 26 May.

is no democracy, the government is essentially autocratic and the need for preventing it from indulging in the worst excesses is thus all the greater. Obviously this does not and must not mean approval of the methods of any political party. Nor does it mean that the Congress or any group should be allowed by government to carry on revolutionary activities or civil disobedience without check or hindrance. But there are certain fundamental principles governing civil liberties which apply whatever the activities of political parties might be, and it has been possible in other countries for the most diverse and mutually hostile groups to combine together for the defence of these principles.

Those who believe that direct action is a necessary and desirable method of political activity are likely to adhere to it. Are we then to conclude that the government is justified not merely in meeting and trying to suppress in the ordinary way this direct action when it takes place, but also to carry on in the way it has been doing during the past few years? If that is the view taken, then that is certainly opposed to the usual conceptions of civil liberty.

Your second point certainly has force though I think it should be possible for us, differ as we might, to cooperate together in this field. The activities of the civil liberties union would necessarily be entirely legal and constitutional in the narrow sense of the term. It might incur the displeasure of government but it would not come into conflict with it.

The real difficulty seems to be a fear that some of us in the Congress might put others in a false position by something that we might do. May I suggest a way out? Why not have a civil liberties union of non-Congressmen? Or there might be two unions cooperating with each other but not committing each other in any way. I can assure you that I have no desire to take advantage of anyone else or to do anything that would put him in a false position. I am only anxious that something should be done to check the unbridled autocracy of the government.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

9. Subhas Day¹

I was in Europe when the new Indian constitution was enacted and many European friends pressed me to express my opinion. I told them always that so long as India was strangled and even ordinary civil liberties of her sons were ruthlessly suppressed, it was sheer nonsense and absurd to talk on the new constitution when there was no liberty to speak out one's mind even. At present the government is carrying on an unfair fight, as it continues those laws which were promulgated when the satyagraha fight was on. No doubt our country has enough brave hearts who will continue the fight for gaining independence. But the government has failed in its duty as a government. At present the government fears that if the people are allowed to enjoy civil liberties they will become too strong and perhaps shake off the foreign domination. Civil liberties of the people are their fundamental right. In European countries people consider it their unquestioned right for protecting which they fought in the past and sacrificed thousands of lives at its altar. People should be allowed to express their opinion by speech or writing. If civil liberties are suppressed a nation loses all vitality and becomes impotent for anything substantial.

The government some time back prohibited even a condolence meeting under the initiative of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, which was an all parties meeting, and in Bengal in many parts even petty details of everyday life are controlled in the name of law and order. Young children of fourteen and fifteen are rotting in jails without even a sham trial. Living in jail is not pleasant to anybody. The energy and activities of these young people could have been utilised better if there was proper discharge of responsibility by the government. What is at present done in Bengal is sure of being extended to other parts of the country if the people do not stand up for protecting their rights.

The Englishman is very honest in things which are likely to bring him profit. While in England, some of them tried to impress upon me the necessity for the Congress to cooperate with the British. I presented the viewpoint specially of the suppression of our bare civil liberties. I frankly told them there and I repeat the same now, that in the present circumstances there cannot be any talk of cooperation. We are a tolerant people and are prepared to cooperate with anybody. But such talks

1. Allahabad, 10 May 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 12 May 1936.

are nonsense so long as there is strangling of our civil liberties. We cannot cooperate with British imperialism which is quite different from Englishmen for whom I have great regard and love. British imperialism is falling and in course of time will entirely disappear.

Subhas Bose's arrest is not only a question of denying one of our beloved leaders his liberties but involves the question of principle and every patriotic Indian, no matter to what political party he belongs, should combine together for fighting this growing menace and check the government's high-handedness and protect our civil liberties.

10. On the Proposed Civil Liberties Union¹

I had not intended issuing any further statement just yet on the proposed civil liberties union as I was waiting for replies from all those persons to whom I had sent my circular letter. A large number of replies have already reached me, but some still remain. I am also in correspondence with the American Civil Liberties Union² and the British National Union of Civil Liberties. On receipt of this information I hope to communicate again with those to whom I had previously addressed my letters as well as to issue a statement in the press. That fuller statement will be issued later. But as I find some erroneous references in the press I am compelled to correct them. One such statement refers to the "futile replies" which I am supposed to have received from Maulvi Shafi Daudi³ and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. This is entirely wrong. Maulvi Shafi Daudi has already sent his letter to the press and so I have

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 12 May 1936. *The Leader*, 14 May 1936.
2. The American Civil Liberties Union was founded in 1920 "to champion the right of all people, regardless of race, colour, place of birth, position, income, political opinions or religious beliefs, to the opportunity of free expression, inquiry and assembly and of fair trial before the law."
3. Maulana Shafi Daudi, the working secretary of the All India Muslim Conference, wrote to Jawaharlal, "The malady in us is the lust of suppressing the liberty of our own kith and kin (that of minorities by the majorities). If by your powerful advocacy your countrymen are not assured of their complete liberty the energy of the nation cannot be harnessed for fighting against government."

nothing further to say about it, especially as it largely concerns itself with matters which bear no relation to the question of civil liberties. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya's letter is one of cordial appreciation of the project. He writes: "I heartily agree with you on the necessity and importance of forming such a union, and I will cooperate with you in this matter to the fullest extent I can." I have received many such letters. Some others, however, while agreeing entirely with the object of the civil liberties union, have pointed out certain difficulties in the way of approach to the subject by people of different political persuasions. That consideration cannot certainly be ignored. But I feel that it should be possible here, as it has been possible in other countries, for people differing widely on objects and methods in the political sphere to combine together on this narrower but none the less basic issue on which they agree. That will mean no commitment on other issues and, though there may be different ways of looking at them, if there is a desire to pull together a measure of success should certainly follow.

Such a union would have a national council which would lay down the broad policy to be pursued. It should also have a central office in charge of a competent person who would collect data about the suppression of civil liberties and give publicity to it as objectively as possible. Much of the work, however, of the union should fall on local committees in the larger towns. The membership of the union is not meant to be a mass membership, but it should be open to any person who subscribes to its object of the protection of all civil liberties and pays a certain annual subscription which might be fixed at Re. 1. Local work will be done under the direction of the local committees and subject to the general policy of the union. I would suggest that friends interested in this project might ask others who are also interested to give their names for such local committees in the larger towns. Ultimately a central council itself might be elected by these local committees. But to begin with it may be necessary to have a temporary central council functioning from above. I would suggest, therefore, specially to friends in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Delhi, Lahore, Patna, Lucknow, Allahabad, Karachi, Nagpur, Ahmedabad, Poona and some of the other larger towns to form such provisional local committees.

11. To T. C. Goswami¹

Allahabad
May 25, 1936

My dear Tulsi,
Forgive me for the delay in answering your letter. As you know I have been away.

Thank you for what you have said about my *Autobiography*. It was as frank and as truthful of my inner feeling as I could make it. I doubt if I could have written it outside prison. I am glad to find that it is making people think a little.

You must have seen the reaction of our Liberal friends to the proposal for a civil liberties union. It is quite extraordinary how narrow-minded they have become. But I do think that we should do something in this matter in spite of these wise people who move so cautiously. I hope you will take some steps in this matter in Calcutta.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

12. To the Editor, The Leader¹

Mussoorie
16 June 1936

Sir,

In your issue dated June 15, 1936 you refer to the "perverse meaning" which I have attached to certain statements of Liberal leaders in regard to civil liberties.² May I venture to suggest that even perversity has a claim sometimes to be understood? Some Liberal leaders (not all)

1. *The Leader*, 24 June 1936.
2. The editorial argued that the Liberals were against the proposed civil liberties union because it would be a tool in the hands of the Congress and Jawaharlal was attaching a perverse meaning to this by claiming that the Liberals favoured repression.

stated in reply to my circular letter on civil liberties that the restrictions and suppression imposed by the government were largely the outcome of circumstances created by the Congress. Thus in effect that suppression was justified. It was further stated by one prominent Liberal that "it was idle to assert... that the suppression of civil liberties has been progressively getting more widespread and intensive." One may or may not agree with Congress activities in the past or the present, but I venture to assert that this attitude is wholly at variance with the underlying assumption of civil liberties. I do not know what your view is on this aspect of the question and I would welcome enlightenment. It may be that we mean something different when we use the words "civil liberty".

In the same issue you refer to Sir Homi Mody's³ discussion of violence.⁴ So far as my views are concerned on this subject they are contained in my recent book, the *Autobiography*, where a whole chapter is devoted to it. But as Sir Homi Mody and you are so much interested in the possibility or otherwise of violence, and presumably dislike it, may I put to you a difficulty that faces me? The present political and economic system is based essentially on violence; it could not last without continuous use of violence. Disliking violence, how can anyone approve of a system which is an embodiment of violence? Is violence only justifiable when used by the state in support of vested interests? Presuming a development of the democratic process, if a majority is in favour of fundamental social change and the divesting of certain vested interests, would you, Sir, or would Sir Homi Mody, advise those vested interests to submit joyfully to the verdict of the majority, or to resist?

I am etc.,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. (1881-1969); an industrialist of Bombay; president, Employers Federation of India, 1933-41, 1943-49 and 1953-59; member, Central Legislative Assembly, 1929-43; member, Viceroy's executive council, 1941-43; member, Constituent Assembly, 1948-49; Governor of Uttar Pradesh, 1949-52.

4. The editorial quoted Homi Mody as having stated that the economic, social and political change sought by Jawaharlal was not possible without violence.

13. Creation of the Civil Liberties Union¹

Allahabad

July 8, 1936

Dear Friend,

Some weeks ago I addressed a letter to a number of leading men and women in the country on the subject of the formation of an Indian civil liberties union. Most of the answers I received welcomed the proposal; some wanted further information on the subject before they could give their final answer; a few expressed their inability to join the proposed union. Since then the subject has been frequently discussed in the press and in some centres provisional committees have already been formed. It is apparent that the need for a civil liberties union is widely felt and the time has come to give shape and expression to this desire.

In consultation with a number of friends a provisional constitution has been drafted. I enclose a copy of this together with an explanatory note.² This constitution has also been published in the newspapers for public information. The present draft is not the final one. Suggestions for any changes can be sent to me and they will be carefully considered and, where possible, incorporated. But I trust that you will be able to express your general agreement with this provisional constitution as it is hardly possible, at this stage, to refer every suggestion for change to all the people interested in the scheme. When the union has definitely come into existence and is functioning the whole constitution can be revised, if this is considered necessary. You will notice that it is proposed to have a national council of about a hundred members. There is no virtue in this number and, if so desired, the number can be increased. The object is to make the council representative of various parts of India and of various shades of thought. We hope to fix upon a number of foundation members of the council to begin with. Inevitably many desirable and worthwhile people may be left out. These can be added after further consultation.

May I have your permission to include your name in the list of the foundation members of the national council?

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, File No. VI/36, Item No. 17, National Archives of India.
2. Not printed.

I should also like to know if you agree generally with the provisional constitution attached, and also to the proposal that Mrs. Sarojini Naidu should be the president of the union.

An early answer will be gratefully appreciated.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

14. To Rabindranath Tagore¹

Camp Larkana
21 July 1936

Dear Gurudeva,

Some time back I sent you this provisional constitution of the civil liberties union. I trust that the constitution framed meets with your general approval. I have been away from Allahabad and do not know if any answer has come from you.

I have been long hesitating in addressing you in this connection separately. I would be very happy if you would agree to be the honorary president of this union.² I had not suggested this before as I did not wish to add, in any way, to your burdens. But an honorary work of this kind would in no way put any burden on you and it would add to the prestige of our union very greatly. There is obviously no other person in India who could better fill that place. As you know some of us have suggested Mrs. Sarojini Naidu's name for the presidentship or chairmanship of the national council. The idea is that she could be the active head of the council, looking after its general direction, and that you would be the honorary head of the whole organisation. We do not want it to be in any way a Congress organisation or to be political in any narrow sense of the word. Fortunately many prominent non-Congressmen and some people who are not politically inclined are agreeing to join the union. This will give it a broad basis. But with you at the head this would be still more assured. There is a general consensus of opinion on this subject. I do hope that you will be good enough to agree.

1. Visvabharati Papers, Santiniketan.

2. Rabindranath Tagore agreed to be the honorary president.

Please do not trouble to write back yourself. Anil Chanda could drop me a line. My address till the 27th will be Hyderabad (Sind); up to the 1st August: Bradlaugh Hall, Lahore; and after that Allahabad.

With regards,

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

15. To Jal Naoroji¹

Camp Shikarpur
July 23, 1936

My dear Jal,

Your letter missed me in Allahabad and has only just reached me here. This touring about is a very tiring process, even more so mentally than physically. I have been at it this time now for a week and I have still another 12 days to go. It seems a terribly long time.

I am glad that you have realised that the financial condition of Congress people is bad. Division of labour has not progressed very far in this country and those who take to politics very seriously have not only to work on a variety of fronts but have also to provide as far as they can the hard cash for the purpose. That is a difficult operation, but it is far pleasanter than to ask others for money.

It is a standing wonder to me how a person will gladly spend a hundred rupees or more in entertaining me, or many thousands of rupees in some wretched marriage function or other, and yet be averse to giving a small donation for public work. Unto those that have more shall be given. And so three cheers for Sir Cowasji and his kind.²

As for the Civil Liberties Union I am trying to get Rabindranath Tagore to agree to becoming honorary president of the whole organization. Sarojini would continue as president or chairman of the National Council. Of course real work cannot be expected from either

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. In his presidential address to the Bombay Provincial Liberal Conference at Sholapur on 18 July 1936, Sir Cowasji Jehangir reiterated that to Jawaharlal all capitalists were reactionaries. His one ambition was to rouse the peasantry and the masses against the capitalists but how could he deprive great landlords of their lands and the capitalists of their wealth and the people as a whole of their religion under a free and democratic system of government?

of them. The man in charge of the work must be a wholetime paid secretary of some position and competence. I have no such person in view yet though I have thought vaguely about one or two.

Probably I shall reach Bombay on the 18th. I hope I shall be fresher then than I feel now. I am quite fit and even my throat has improved. I have a strong inclination to go to bed for a few days. It is entirely a psychological reaction to daily meetings, processions etc.

We had an interesting exhibition of the functioning of our press in Karachi. There is a paper there called the *Sind Observer*, owned by a Parsi businessman.³ This paper is not favourable to the Congress generally though it has been giving Congress news. Shortly before my arrival there the proprietor issued directions to the editor, a Madras, to give no news at all of the functions with which I was connected or of the Indian States' People's Conference or of the Socialist Conference. He was good enough to add that if the Congress people wanted any news to be published they should pay at advertisement rates for them. But as for the States Conference and the Socialist Conference news were not to be printed even as advertisement. The editor who is by no means an extreme type jibbed at this and gave news. He was forthwith fired and his editorial subordinates continued merrily to carry on under the new dispensation. The editor is being charged personally at advertisement rates for the Congress and other news that he gave.

Yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. Cowasjee Fakirjee was the proprietor of the *Sind Observer*.

4. K. Punniiah, an Andhra journalist, was editor of the *Sind Observer*.

16. To K. Punniiah¹

Camp Shikarpur
July 23, 1936

Dear Mr. Punniiah,

I have seen copies of the correspondence which you sent to Mr. Jairamdas.² There seems to be some omission in it but on the whole

1. A.I.C.C. File No G-62/1936, p. 23, N.M.M.L.

2. About his dismissal from the *Sind Observer*.

it is fairly complete. But one thing I do not know, and I should like to know that before I take any further step in the matter. The only step that I can take is to issue a statement and I propose to do that as soon as I hear from you.³

I want to know what you are going to do in the matter. That is to say, whether you are giving publicity to this correspondence, whether you are addressing the All India Journalists' Association on the subject and, if so, on what lines? I think that you should certainly give publicity to the correspondence yourself. If you are issuing any statement kindly send me a copy to Hyderabad where I hope to reach on the 27th.

I should also like to know if the rest of the editorial staff of the *Sind Observer* have decided to carry on the paper and with the proprietors under these new conditions. It seems to me an extraordinary thing for any journalist to do, but then many of our journalists are of a peculiar kind. I am sure that most Indian papers would take up the matter and give full publicity to it. You might also write personal letters to the editors of some of the leading papers like *The Bombay Chronicle*, *The Hindu*, the Calcutta papers, the Delhi papers, the Lahore papers etc.

If I hear from you at Hyderabad, as I hope to do, I shall issue a statement to the press then.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. See the following item.

17. On the Lot of Indian Journalists¹

The lot of a journalist is a hard one in India. He has to face a battery of formidable press laws, which demand securities and threaten their confiscations as well as the confiscation of the entire press. He has to live in constant dread of the law of sedition and other laws, which might land him in prison.

1. Statement to the press, Hyderabad, 27 July 1936. *The Hindustan Times*, 28 July 1936.

He has, particularly in Bengal, to face the day to day pressure backed by veiled or unveiled threats of coercive action of the press censor. It is even loudly whispered that this gentle pressure of the press censor has led important nationalist newspapers to give in their editorial columns articles, which had been written in the press censor's office. Some other newspapers, which pose as being independent, look for inspiration to this office.

The lot of the Indian journalist is indeed a hard one and worse even than the penalties imposed upon him. He is in constant dread of what might happen. For these dangers and difficulties, the government is responsible but a very glaring example of another danger has recently come before the public. To some extent, this has existed but the fate of the editor of the *Sind Observer* has thrown a searchlight on these happenings behind the scenes.

The *Sind Observer* has never been a pro-Congress organ. It is essentially moderate and has supported a communal party. Its old editor, Mr. Punniiah, has frequently criticised me. He has gone on deputation to the Governor offering his whole-hearted cooperation. Thus there is little in common between my politics and his but this is not a matter of politics but of the most elementary rights of journalists. Outside interference with the expression of views is bad enough but far more dangerous is the attitude and attempts to suppress the news.

No journalist, who has even an inkling of respect for his profession or of the service he owes to the public, can ever tolerate this deliberate misleading of the public by suppression of news on the eve of my arrival in Karachi. Mr. Punniiah was directed in writing by the proprietor of the *Sind Observer*, who is an Indian, to refrain from giving certain news and reports in the paper.

Some of these directions are interesting—the extracts from the civic address to the President of the Congress and a few extracts from the President's reply shall be published and not the full text.

That no verbatim report of the proceedings of any meetings or interviews or speeches connected with the visit of the President of the Congress shall be published, that no photographs of anyone or gathering connected with the Congress shall appear, no report whatsoever shall be published of the proceedings of any of the meetings, interviews or of speeches nor any photographs shall appear in connection with the Indian States' People's Conference and even if these bodies or any persons desire to pay for the same, no report shall be given of the activities of the Parsi Rajkutiya Sabha of Karachi or any announcement of their meetings or of any meetings under their auspices shall be published even on payment.

Mr. Punniiah refused to carry out the directions and gave the news of these events, at the same time expressing his disagreement with my views. He was forthwith dismissed from his post by the proprietor of the paper and was called upon to pay for these insertions at advertisement rates.

This seems to me a monstrous interference with an editor's discretion and an insult to the public.

I am glad that the public has reacted strongly to this insult.² I must repeat that this is not a matter of views but of the news and it cuts at the very root of everything that a newspaper stands for; I disagree entirely with Mr. Punniiah in his views and policy but I must stand up for the fundamental privileges of the journalists and the public.

I trust that the Journalists' Association will take this matter in hand. Such an encroachment of their rights cannot be allowed to go unchallenged and any journalist, who submits to it, is not worthy of his responsible profession.

2. The Karachi Municipal Corporation adjourned on 21 July 1936 for five minutes as a protest against the dismissal of Punniiah; the Sind Journalists Association passed a resolution congratulating Punniiah for upholding the honour of the profession, and at a public meeting of the citizens of Karachi on 21 July 1936 the conduct of the board of directors was condemned and a boycott of the *Sind Observer* advocated.

18. Inauguration of the Civil Liberties Union at Bombay¹

This meeting has been called with a definite purpose. It is not an occasion when I can say all I feel about the political and economic situation in the country.

About three months ago the idea of starting an Indian civil liberties union was mooted. Since then there have been discussions both among the political and other leaders in the country as also in the newspapers. India is a vast country having people holding various views on questions and it was certainly not an easy problem to start a civil liberties union. There was no doubt that there was a great necessity for the starting of such an organisation. But it was felt that rather

1. 24 August 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 25 August 1936.

than doing things in a hurry it should take its own time so that the organisation could be started on a broad basis and it could be a sound and solid structure.

The constitution of the Indian Civil Liberties Union, which has been drafted on the lines of the Civil Liberties Union of America and the National Civil Liberties Union of Great Britain, has been drafted in a manner which would help a great deal in the future development of the organisation. As soon as the constitution is adopted—as a matter of fact it has been adopted—the official organisation will come into existence. Before long, I am sure, similar organisations will be started all over the country. I consider the fight against the suppression of civil liberties as part of the fight for independence. It is essential that people holding different political views should come on a common platform wherever possible and work for a common cause. The Congress is the largest organisation in the country. The Congress has been fighting for the civil liberties of Indians. But there are several others who, though not subscribing to the Congress policy and programme, hold as strong views on the question of suppression of civil liberties. These two can come together and work together on this common question. By such sort of cooperation on common questions, one can slowly expect to have a joint front on several questions.

Some people do not want to join the Civil Liberties Union as they are non-political men. I do not know as to how any person in a slave country can call himself a non-politically-minded person. One may not be interested in politics, one may be an artist or an author or a painter, but yet as long as his country is under foreign domination, he is bound to be politically-minded. I value the friendship of some of those who are not in the political field because it gives me a lot of relief for being able to be away for some time from the political variety. Supposing civil disobedience is started, those who take part in the movement get into the jails, then it would be the duty of those who remain outside to fight against the suppression of civil liberties.

The executive of the National Council of the Indian Civil Liberties Union will lay down the general policy on which the Union will work. The details of work will, of course, fall on the local committees. The Union is not meant to be a mass organisation, though there is no restriction on anyone becoming a member. It will keep in touch with the suppression of civil liberties in the provinces, collect facts and publish them, keep in touch with the foreign unions and get their help and sympathy. It will get into touch with those organisations and through them with world opinion. The British Government cares a great deal about world opinion. I hope that the Bombay Union will be a

model union, an example to be followed by the other unions to be started in the country. The honorary president of the Indian Union is Dr. Rabindranath Tagore and it is not possible to get a better man than he for this post. He is respected very greatly all the world over and is an international personality. The actual chairman is Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and it is an extraordinarily desirable choice.

Out of the 150 letters inviting people to become members of the General Council, I have received very few refusals. Hardly 10 or so have declined to be members. Of them there is Gandhiji whose refusal is hardly a refusal because he has blessed the organisation, but has said that since he is out of politics he would not like to be in the Council. Similarly some of the members of the Congress Working Committee have stated that it is necessary to bring non-Congressmen in. There is no use in the same people who have been fighting for civil liberties being there. Whenever their help is wanted it will be gladly given.

Some people do not want to join the Union for one reason or other. When one suspects the motives of the people who propose to start a civil liberties union, I feel that there is nothing that can be said about it. People may disagree on several matters in politics or otherwise, but they can easily agree on fighting for their civil liberties. Someone has said that the starting of the Civil Liberties Union is the second string to the Congress bow.² I told him that the Congress bow was a hefty bow and had many strings to it and many more would be added to it. To suspect our motives is unfair. Education is worth nothing without civil liberty. There are people who mix up the Civil Liberties Union with several things and confuse the matter. A big leader refused to join the Civil Liberties Union because I attacked him or his group in my *Autobiography*. I for one welcome criticism; I am in favour of the clearest and strongest criticism of views, if the critics disagree with them. It should, however, be without malice and it should not be personal. But strong criticism of one's views should not be taken as a personal attack. One can strongly criticise the views of a certain person and yet be one of his best friends. For a healthy and democratic growth of public life it is very essential that there should be strong and open criticism.

There is a high standard of public life in India, for which Mahatma Gandhi is responsible to a very great extent. The public life in India is unlike the public life in the West. When the country is engaged in very big things, it would not do to get offended because one's views are

2. N.C. Kelkar.

criticised. I want to clear a misunderstanding about the book I have written. I wrote what I felt. I did not have in view personalities at all. I was concerned with ideals and principles. The question of civil liberty arises not when the people of a country obediently carry on the orders of the government. It arises only when there is a conflict between the people and the executive authority. The idea of civil liberty is to have the right to oppose the government.

19. On the Role of the Press¹

Journalism and journalists play a very important part in the public life in the modern world. In India there is the possibility of suppression of facts either by the government or by private proprietors or at the dictates of advertisers. While I do not mind the newspapers giving prominence to certain type of news in accordance with their policy, I am against suppression of news as it would deprive the public of the only means of forming a correct judgment on world events.

What is important is that the people should get correct and adequate information and they must be left to form their judgment, though the press, of course, helps in the formation of public opinion. In Germany and Italy the press is not free and publishes what the nazi and fascist rulers want to publish. In fact the Germans in Germany do not, through their newspapers, know much of what is happening in their own country and derive information on these matters from the foreign papers that are allowed entry. I express my admiration for the British press. Even in England, papers deliberately suppress certain type of news, although the British Government does not overtly interfere with the discretion of the newspapers in publishing news. But the British Foreign Office has its own dignified ways of influencing newspapers which generally accept its suggestions. So far as India is concerned the British press is hardly reliable. It does not publish the truth about India, except in rare cases. In India I hope this tendency of suppressing news that vested interests do not like will not grow.

1. Reply to an address of welcome from the journalists of Bombay, 24 August 1936.
From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 25 August 1936.

Keep that power in your hands. If that goes then your importance also goes.

Mr. Brelvi in his address has criticised the treatment meted out to journalists by the politicians. Nobody underestimates the importance of the press. We all recognise its need and importance in the modern world and also realise that it can make or mar reputations and, therefore, it is not surprising that human nature being what it is, the politicians "make love to the press". But there are occasions and places where newspapermen are not welcome.

20. To V.K. Krishna Menon¹

September 3, 1936

My dear Krishna,

... About civil liberties you seem to be under some misapprehension. There is or can be no question of our affiliating the Indian Civil Liberties Union to the English one. As a matter of fact this is not organisationally possible as the British Union is a national union which cannot even affiliate a similar union in the Irish Free State. But the Indian Union proposes to develop close contacts with all civil liberties unions abroad. I cannot say what exactly the Indian Union will do as the Council which will control it is a mixed and varied one. We have definitely tried to include in it all manner of people. On this question our idea was and is to build up in India the widest possible front.

It is not possible for me to judge of the right line of action in regard to this matter in England. You are in a better position to judge. But it seems to me that there can be no harm in close cooperation between you and the British Union. We do not expect much from the latter but my own tendency is to err on the side of inclusion rather than on exclusion. There may be risks in this. I would take them....

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

21. To Mulk Raj Anand¹

September 3, 1936

Dear Anand,²

Thank you for your letter. Your cable also reached me but it took a long time in doing so as I was travelling. There was no point in my answering it then as you must have received by that time the note³ I sent you on civil liberties through Lohia.⁴

I am glad you are pushing the civil liberties question through various organisations. I think special stress should be laid on the press laws, the censorship, the banning of books and the stopping of even unbanned books by the Sea Customs Act.

I do not know if you have issued a manifesto as mentioned in your letter.⁵ Ordinarily I could have no objection to giving you authority to add my name, but I occupy a peculiar position at present and every word I say is keenly examined and sometimes variously interpreted. Something that may be wholly suitable in England may not quite fit in in India. I would therefore prefer to see anything to which my name is to be attached.

I have seen the first number of the *New India Literature*. It is an interesting and attractive collection.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1905); author of *Coolie*, *Untouchable* and other novels and short stories in English; editor of *Marg* magazine.
3. In his letter of 18 July 1936, Anand requested Jawaharlal for a note on the Civil Liberties Union which could be published in the *Left Review*. The note is not available.
4. Ram Manohar Lohia (1910-1967); joined the Congress Socialist Party in 1934; secretary of the foreign department of the A.I.C.C., 1936-38; left the Congress in 1948; general secretary, Praja-Socialist Party, 1953-54; one of the founders of the Socialist Party; member, Lok Sabha, 1963-67; author of several books including *Marx*, *Gandhi and Socialism*.
5. A manifesto was to be issued in the *Left Review* against the censorship laws in India.

22. Congressmen and Free Speech¹

Elections do not bring out human nature at its best, and election meetings even in that home of the "mother of parliaments", England, have gained an unpleasant notoriety. But why should we copy the West in this matter? The recent incident in Poona, when Sir Cowasji Jehangir was prevented from speaking,² reminded me forcibly of election meetings in England when an unpopular speaker attacks a popular cause. I regret greatly that he was so prevented for this can only result in a diversion of public interest from the principles and policies for which the Congress or the Liberal Party stands to the incident itself. It will set a bad precedent, and personalities will be involved when principles must occupy the forefront. Congressmen stand for certain principles and they have given proof of their earnest adherence to them at the cost of tremendous suffering. We hold that the liberal policy has no fundamental principles and that it is based on trivial matters of the moment and has no real comprehension of the problems of India and the world. The great majority of the people of the country have willingly accepted our viewpoint, for ours is an unassailable position from the points of view of both national honour and public policy. Therefore we must concentrate on these principles and prevent the argument from degenerating to one of personalities. We must give the fullest opportunity to those who disagree with us to give expression to their views, for only thus can we expose the hollowness of their policy. Else they will take refuge in argument over trivial details and sidetrack the main issue. We must adhere to the democratic tradition.

These remarks of mine have a wide application. In regard to the particular incident at Poona, I must say that I see nothing to object to in Sir Cowasji calling me "a spoilt child of the Congress". There is truth in that remark for my comrades of the Congress and the country generally have indeed done everything to spoil me by the excessive affection and goodwill that they have showered on me. I am human enough to react to this and if I behave occasionally like a spoilt child,

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 4 September 1936. *The Leader*, 6 September 1936.
2. He was prevented from addressing an election meeting arranged by the Liberals at Poona on 29 August 1936.

I claim the indulgence of my comrades. I am frightened by the very excess of affection that comes to me from innumerable people, and so when there is opposition, I welcome it for it helps me to see things in proper perspective.

Sir Cowasji's remark, I think, was perfectly justifiable, but even if he had used stronger language, I would not have had the slightest grievance and I would have begged my friends and comrades not to object. I like opposition whether from individuals or crowds. I like facing an aggressive crowd and trying to tone it down and winning it over. But some of our political opponents are not so used to crowds, aggressive or otherwise, and one must remember this fact.

I earnestly trust that Congressmen will bear themselves with dignity in the heat and dust of the election campaign. We have to conserve our strength for big tasks and we may not waste it in empty opposition.

Sir Cowasji Jehangir has asked me if I stand for a democratic solution of India's problems. I repeat, therefore, what I have already told him previously, that I stand for the fullest democracy in India, and for the people of India to have the final voice in deciding all our important problems. Does he also stand for this full democracy?

23. Inauguration of the Civil Liberties Union at Madras¹

We talk and we have talked a great deal about civil liberty in this country. There has been a great deal of suppression of civil liberty, but I must confess to you frankly that I doubt sometimes if we—and when I say we, I include, of course, Congressmen as well as non-Congressmen in the public life of the country—have any active emotional appreciation of the idea of civil liberty. We might have some intellectual appreciation of it but that does not take us very far. When I think of the Congress, being in some sense the suffering party, its motive might be challenged—as it has been. The real test of appreciation of the suppression of civil liberty comes not when a person is himself attacked, but when he feels irritated at the action of the attacker on somebody and on something utterly disliked by him. When

1. 8 October 1936. From *The Hindu*, 9 October 1936.

such suppression takes place by state action you should feel incumbent to oppose that action and you must feel called upon to stand up to the state. If you really believe in the various kinds of personal freedom which are comprised in the term civil liberty, then it means that you will like that liberty to be given to your opponent and you will like it to exist in a large measure in the country even if its existence is against the state.

We are told in Bengal that, in spite of the various ordinances, law-abiding people are perfectly safe. Now, what exactly does this mean? It means that people who faithfully carry out every order issued, be it reasonable or unreasonable, are perfectly safe. I suppose they will be always safe even in the worst tyranny. Why should they not be safe, when they themselves become the pillars of tyranny? But the thing is, when people who criticise the state and fight against the state—I am referring to fighting not by way of violence or revolution—how much freedom have they got? That is the test. And if you measure by that test you will find how much or what measure of civil liberty exists in India today.

During the last few years this question has often been discussed. I myself wondered sometimes why the idea of forming a civil liberties union did not strike many lawyer friends who did not join the civil disobedience movement. I think that any person is perfectly justified in saying that he does not approve of a thing. But when civil liberties were crushed, when the most ordinary political activities could not be carried on, it became the duty of every citizen to stand up to the government—dissociating himself, if necessary, from the civil disobedience campaign. There was relatively little response in India to the call of civil liberty. I found even, often enough, that although my own colleagues of the Congress mentioned civil liberty, they themselves construed civil liberty to mean, in a sense, toning down of the government's offensive towards themselves. They did not see it in the proper perspective. I felt that there was something lacking in our conception of civil liberty.

You will also see another argument, the argument which Sir P.S. Sivaswamy Aiyar has advanced in his reply to my letter. That argument, with all respect, I wish to state is an argument which can only be advanced by a person who has never understood or has no conception of civil liberty. Although Sir P.S. Sivaswamy Aiyar is an eminent Liberal leader, I am sure he does not represent the views of all the Liberals. His argument is a monstrous argument, an argument which has been fully advanced by Viceroys and Governors and like officials. I am almost tempted to say that Viceroys and Governors,

when they advanced such arguments, had their tongues in their cheeks. It is really necessary for us, I feel, if we are preparing for a democratic form of government, or for that matter any form of government, and for political, cultural, economic, social or moral development, to realise that civil liberty is essential. You cannot have individual or national growth without a measure of civil liberty for individuals to express their thoughts and ideas, and to meet together and to write in newspapers.

Remember this also, that apart from the positive acts of suppression of civil liberty, far more dangerous is the atmosphere of fear that is created, which prevents people from saying or writing in accordance with their wishes. Take the press in India, especially the press in Bengal, which had to function during the last few years with all manner of threats that have been issued alongside of the enormous amount of press laws. You forget this continuous background, this deadly background of the shadow of the press laws, the deadly shadow of the censorship coming before the poor manager or editor. I do not know how an editor can function at all in this atmosphere. The really terrible thing is not the actual action taken from time to time to suppress newspapers or books, but this atmosphere of fear that is created. Where there is fear, there can be no development of the human spirit.

Do not imagine that by mere formation of a civil liberties union, we are going to get back our civil liberty. What we have to do is to face further deprivation of civil liberties. As long as the shadow of imperialism is not removed the danger is of more civil liberties being removed. That is the great danger now. What seemed twenty years ago the worst deprivation of civil rights, we have now got used to it. The organisation you have formed today should not only be vigilant about protecting civil liberties but should also see that there is no further deprivation of civil liberties. At any rate, you have to check the continuance of further deprivation.

I think something has been said regarding the kind of union you should have. It is clear that such a union should have representatives of every shade of thought which believes in civil liberty. It must not have any political affiliation with any party. Its individuals may have political views, but the organisation as a whole should not have any political views or aims. Otherwise it will become a mere appendage to a political organisation. It must retain its non-party character. That is the idea in my mind when I consulted others and issued various circulars on the subject. Unfortunately, some friends took a different view, and did not respond well and I have already referred to the reply of Sir P.S. Sivaswamy Aiyar. His view is a practical negation

of civil liberty. Others agreed with the principle I proposed, yet did not wish to join the Union. I am sorry they took a view which had nothing to do with any principle. I think they are afraid of Congressmen and they feared my humble self. It is unfortunate that we should consider this question from the point of view of personalities and not on grounds of principle. I am glad, therefore, that in Madras there is some encouragement.

The Union should be as broadbased as possible. I gave expression sometimes to harsh language while referring to the acts of the opponents of the Congress, but I think that those interested in public affairs should always be prepared for common action in respect of matters of common agreement. I do not think that they, on matters of agreement, should consider themselves untouchables. That seems to me to be an unjustifiable attitude, and I hope that this Union will attract more members from the Liberal Party who, I know, are strongly in favour of the principle. A reference has been made to the work of Mr. T. R. Venkatarama Sastriar.³ I am glad about it. I would be very happy if such work is taken up by others and continued. Lawyers are obviously the persons who can join the Union. I do not want that this Union should be dominated by Congressmen or that Congressmen should hold the leading strings.

Unfortunately or fortunately, Congressmen are to be found in large numbers in various places. You cannot easily ignore them. Congressmen are often found to be the most active element in the community. I would be happy if persons other than Congressmen join the Union in large numbers. An executive of All India Central Council has been formed, and in towns and cities local unions should be formed. I am glad that a union has been started in Madras, because Madras in many ways is specially suited for this work.

Obviously a civil liberties union is not intended to be a mass organisation of hundreds and thousands. It is a union obviously more or less confined to the intellectuals who understand the principles of civil liberty. In other countries, civil liberties unions are generally composed of lawyers, professors, literary men, authors, publishers, etc. There are not in such unions many active and aggressive politicians. Here, we have not got quite such a wide field to choose from as in America or other countries where there are more independent professions. The principles involved in the subject are semi-legal, and there should be a lawyers' committee to advise and defend cases.

3. (1874-1953); Liberal leader; member, Governor's executive council, Madras, for a few days; advocate-general, Madras, 1924-1928.

I have nothing more to say. But I have received a slip containing a few questions. The questions are nasty and their object is to put me in a hole. Perhaps, for the purpose of enjoying my discomfiture. I shall read them, however, so that you can see my discomfiture.

The questions are:

- (1) Can you tell us from your personal experience of Soviet Russia, whether there are civil liberty unions in Russia? If so, whether these unions tried to help Trotsky, Zinoviev⁴ and Kamenev⁵ who were exiled or shot after the farce of a trial?
- (2) Is there any room for difference of views in a dictatorship like that of Stalin which you admire so much?
- (3) Do you admit that there is more civil liberty in India at present than in Russia?
- (4) If you make a speech in Moscow attacking communism in the manner in which you have been attacking British imperialism in Madras, do you hope to remain a free man as you are at present?

Now, friends, my discomfiture is complete. These questions assume that I am a fervent admirer of everything that happens in Russia, which, of course, I am not. In Russia, recently there was that trial. I do not know the circumstances, and I do not feel competent to pass any definite opinion. The news we get is usually coloured. I do not think I will be justified in expressing a definite opinion on a matter which I do not know thoroughly. This trial had a reaction on me. That I can say. I do not know if it was a farce of a trial. A well-known English barrister, Mr. Pritt, I think, was in Russia by chance at the time of the trial, and he has said that seldom did he see a fairer trial than that so far as legal formalities were concerned. As I said, the trial produced a bad impression on me. I am not a fervent admirer of the Stalin dictatorship. I admire the economic transformation of the land there, the development of its social life, its educational and cultural activities. To a large extent, I am an individualist. I feel that there is more room for the development of individualism in a socialistic state. Today, only a handful, those at the top, are individualistic and in socialism there is the hope of getting more security for the people and for more people becoming individualistic. In socialism, there is more freedom of work and you get in it a greater chance to assert your individuality than

⁴ and ⁵ Zinoviev and Kamenev were leading Bolsheviks who were expelled from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union along with Trotsky in 1927, and executed after the treason trials of 1936.

in a capitalistic society. I do not presume to be a blind follower of any system. I am trying to propagate the ideas underlying the system of socialism. I cannot, however, shut my eyes to the defects found in the application of that system. But as I understand the socialistic system, I think it aims at the fullest democracy and the fullest civil liberty.

Today the so-called democratic countries in the West are democratic only in a political sense. It is not enough to give a vote to a hungry man. That vote can be bought or influenced. In order to have the fullest democracy, you must have an economic democracy. The failure of democracy in Europe is the failure of the one-sided and partial democracy. Fascism and socialism are poles asunder.

Within the framework of socialism and communism we have a greater chance for the development of the individual than in the so-called individualistic and capitalistic society. That is how I try to reconcile the two ideas of socialism and individualism. There are today the so-called democratic countries like England, France and America which are only democratic in the political sense. That is not enough. In order to have a full democracy, you must have also economic democracy in addition to political democracy. Now we talk in terms of fascist and socialist dictatorships. We put the two on the same footing without understanding either. The fascist dictatorship is based on the utter negation of democracy and the utter negation of the liberty of the individual. It is not only so in actual fact, but also according to fascist theory and ideology. The socialist dictatorship believes and aims at the fullest democracy and civil liberty and ultimately it aims at a stage when there will be no necessity for the coercive authority of the state. No new system can come into being without a difficult transitional period in which a dictatorship is necessary. But this does not mean the dictatorship of an individual. It means the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is, of the 95 or 98 per cent of the people in contrast to the 2 or 5 per cent in the other system. As regards the last question, I think, perhaps Russia would not have allowed me to carry on propaganda there and I would have suffered. But this question is beyond the scope of the subject. So far, about these questions.

Question: Does your type of socialism obtain in any part of the world?

Jawaharlal Nehru: My type of socialism! What obtains in the world you know. You want to cross-examine me. I hope socialism will be established the world over.

24. To V. K. Krishna Menon¹

October 29, 1936

My dear Krishna,

... And now I come to an important matter which requires your careful consideration because it affects you. I suggest to you that you might come over to India soon, say, for six months or so, and take charge of the civil liberties organisation here as a secretary. Don't be put off at the abruptness of the proposal. There are many reasons why I am making it. I think that if you gave a push to the Civil Liberties Union in India and organise it on a proper basis it would go a long way. Apart from this I think it would be good thing for you to come to India and have a look round and meet people. You cannot do effective work, even in England, unless you renew contacts in India. I think also, that your coming to India would be good for you, because it will give you a much needed change. Then again I should like you to come here so that I might discuss many things with you. The more I think of it the more does the idea of your coming here and spending some time in India appeal to me. The India League work will of course suffer. It may even stop, but that cannot be helped and perhaps you can be of some assistance to it even from India. Remember that I am not suggesting for the moment that you should return for good. For the present I think that you should think of coming here for 6 months or so. You can decide later as to when you should go back. If you find that you are doing really worthwhile work here then you can stay on. You need not confine yourself to civil liberties work later, but, to begin with, that ought to be your principal job. It will provide for you a definite place in our public life here in which you can fit in with the greatest ease. There are of course so many other things which you can also do.

About the finances. The Civil Liberties Union, at the present moment, lives on air and has no resources. That is of course because we have not tried to collect funds for it. It will not be difficult for us to get some money and we have always intended paying a wholetime secretary of the organisation who will be the principal executive as the honorary president (Tagore) and the head of the Council (Sarojini Naidu) cannot give much time or energy to it. We do not and cannot pay heavy allowances. But you will not require that. However this is a matter between you and me and there will be no difficulty. I shall

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

also try to arrange for your steamer fare to India. So the financial part need not come in your way.

I am writing this practically off my own bat, though I have consulted a few friends. I am informing Sarojini that I am writing to you and I shall mention the fact to Tagore whom I am likely to see soon. I am quite sure, however, that all of us will welcome your taking charge of the civil liberties business. We want a few intelligent men about. There is no superfluity of them. You won't have a soft job, the difficulty coming in your dealings with the stupid ones who abound.

Think over all this and send me a brief cable soon to indicate what your reaction is to my proposal. If your answer is "yes" I would suggest that you should try to come as early as possible and certainly in time for the Congress session. I suppose you will have no difficulty in raising funds for your passage. We can settle accounts later. Perhaps Lane² could make an advance from my accounts. A sufficient cable address for me is "Nehru Allahabad"....

As I have mentioned above, I am suggesting this on my own initiative. But you can place some reliance in me. I cannot let you down.³

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. John Lane the Bodley Head, publishers of the *Autobiography*.

3. In fact, Krishna Menon did not return to India, and Dr. K.B. Menon became secretary of the Civil Liberties Union.

25. On the Freedom of the Press¹

A person who aspires to be a public man must inevitably come in contact with the press. However much he may be irritated at times he must ultimately be inclined to love the press.

I ought to have been a journalist instead of what I am. It is difficult to reply to this. But certainly I think that if I had no other job in life I should have turned to journalism. I might have earned my living from the profession of journalism. I write articles in the daily

1. Reply to address of welcome presented by the Indian Journalists Association, Calcutta, 5 November 1936. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 6 November 1936.

press but they are not paid for by the proprietors of the papers. I do not know if this is the way they can establish the profession of journalism in the country.

I know the difficulties which the owners of newspapers and periodicals in India have to face. But I feel that among the owners there is a tendency to exploit their subordinates and it is a thing which seems to me to be an extraordinarily short-sighted policy. Therefore in the interest of good work one must give a good living wage to the worker whether he is a journalist or connected with the press in any other capacity.

The impression I gather from the meeting is that the profession of journalism is confined to the members of the male sex. That is surprising because I have noticed that in other countries women have come much to the fore in the profession and they possess some of the best qualities to shine in that profession which the male members lack.

You are well acquainted with the fairly notorious press laws. But I feel that you do not realise them although you talk so much of the difficulties which come in your way. Although you know that the press laws are there, you have no vivid realisation of the danger. Almost daily you read in newspapers about confiscation and forfeiture of press security but somehow you are accustomed to them. For this state of affairs I feel that you yourselves are at fault, in not presenting your case properly, pointedly and logically. You are all well acquainted with the government actions against the press. But it was only when I read speeches delivered at the last press conference wherein there was given a connected account of the whole thing that I was astounded. The whole case was put there and it impressed me very much. And this happened to me who knows much of the press laws. Imagine what effect it would produce on a man who does not know much about them.

I am not surprised that the appeal of the Indian Journalists' Association to the foreign press did not evoke much response except in a section of the American press. They know the state of affairs in countries like Germany and Italy but in a country like France the people are interested to know the case of India in spite of the fact that they are wrapt in serious problems of the state. But what they actually want are not vague statements but detailed facts and figures which cannot be supplied to them. In England, however, there is a remarkable situation. There is the tradition of freedom of the press, certainly as strong as anywhere, but so far as India is concerned, out of imperial consideration, the English people have developed a peculiar attitude. I refer to the period of 1932 and onwards when a great civil disobedience movement was going on in India. There was hardly a mention about

that in the British press and that was because a word had gone round that India was not to be mentioned in the British press. Fleet Street was told not to publish anything about India except occasional anecdotes about rajas and maharajas and things like that. I was amazed to notice that manner of extraordinary discipline of the British press. Just a hint from the India Office was sufficient enough for them to fall in line. In Germany there was compulsion to achieve this but in England the sheer sense of imperial consideration was enough. It was difficult for me to understand this but I must say that I admire that marvellous and single-minded devotion of the English people to the imperialist cause.

It is bad enough to carry false news or propaganda news but I think that readers after some time can accustom themselves to accepting that type of news after proper discount. But the real danger lies in the suppression of news when readers are denied totally in forming their opinion about it. For instance the news about Germany they can read more from outside than in Germany itself where all unwelcome news is suppressed.

In India the journalists know more than I do how the news is suppressed. Even when there is no direct prohibition of news there is the indirect prohibition. That is a dangerous thing which the journalists have to face even more than the distortion of news. This kind of danger is increasing more and more both in India and outside. It is important not only from the point of view of journalists but of all right-thinking individuals who prize the freedom of the press. There is another danger and that is radio which is sure to be a strong rival to the press. It is not yet strong enough in India but it is sure to be a terrible engine for governmental propaganda and may affect the newspaper press.

The question of freedom of the press is a vital question and inevitably the brunt of the fight must fall upon the journalists; but the general public must also take their fair share in it. I hope that in an organised way and not only through your newspaper but through your Association as well you will try to keep the public wide awake about their duty towards it. Your criticism ought to be pointed and lawyer-like. And for this you will get all cooperation and help from the foreign department of the All India Congress Committee and the Civil Liberties Union.

26. Address to the Civil Liberties Union in Calcutta¹

If it is necessary to have a union like this in other countries, it is all the more necessary in India and still more necessary in Bengal. In fact the necessity for a civil liberty union arises when there is a growing suppression of civil liberties. The more the suppressions the more the necessity. In England there is a civil liberty union which, as far as I remember, first saw the light of day when a Sedition Act was proposed there a few years back. Of course, that Sedition Act was nothing in comparison with various acts, ordinances and regulations which we have here. But anyway that gave rise to tremendous agitation in England, agitation not merely by what may be called the politically advanced people but a large number of conservatives and other people also joined it and the reason was that in England there was still some respect for civil liberties. And the result was that the bill was considerably toned down and it was passed in a truncated form. And so the civil liberty union came into being in England because of that Act and it has been functioning quite effectively since then. There whenever there is any occasion the union immediately takes action. It is not a large body. There they think more in terms of having in the committee representatives of various schools of thought than in terms of number. If there is any likelihood of interference on the part of the police, they do not wait for the things to happen, they take measures beforehand. And the result has been that what might have happened actually did not happen. The very knowledge that there are a number of competent men to deal with such matters, makes the police behave in a proper way. In America also the civil liberty union has been functioning effectively for a long time. It has many branches and is carrying on its work on a very large scale. In India such a union is needed far more because there cannot be any comparison in matters of suppression of civil liberties between India and other countries.

The position in this country is that we get used to such things. We sometimes protest, we sometimes express indignation. But the fact remains that some time after we get used to it and we do not feel very strongly about. What do they do in England? If anything happens in England, they start a fierce agitation. They go on agitating and taking steps till the wrong is redressed.

1. 7 November 1936. From *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 8 November 1936.

Compared to the various laws, regulations and ordinances which we have now, the Rowlatt Bill may be almost called a charter of liberty. Now there is censorship, ban on publication, ban on associations and so on. These are astounding things. But we get used to such things, we become dull and the result is that we often cannot realise what is happening. We talk about our sufferings and so on but we do not collect facts and place them before our countrymen in a systematic way. I have been intimately connected with Indian politics and as such I always try to find out what happens with regard to suppression of civil liberties and other things. But there is this handicap that I do not get all facts in a connected and concentrated form. The facts contained in the address of Mr. Mrinal Kanti Basu as chairman of the reception committee of the All India Journalists' Conference are astounding. What is needed therefore is collection of facts and placing them in a systematic manner before the countrymen. As we grow in strength, the suppression of civil liberties becomes intenser. That shows the intensity of our struggle. A civil liberties union is a check to some extent on executive action. But so far as many other important matters are concerned, a more effective check is possible only through a powerful organisation like the Indian National Congress.

An All India National Council has been established consisting of about 130 members. They are spread all over India. But in such an organisation it is difficult for them to meet. They have got to face that difficulty. For most of its executive work small committees may be appointed. The most necessary thing is collection of facts and publicity to those facts. There is a need of appointing a competent, well-informed wholtime man to act as secretary who will have to do most of the things necessary. I hope that the public in Bengal would come forward to help the Bengal branch of the Union with funds without which it is impossible for the Union to work. The question of detenus in Bengal is an important question and I would like a special department of the Civil Liberties Union to take up the question of the detenus. The National Committee is a very representative committee and I also want a competent man to act as secretary. When we get a man like this we expect to function more vigorously than we are doing at the present moment.

When the Congress is confronted with a particular crisis against which we must fight, we would see that nobody comes and puts obstacles in our way. We cannot allow our country to play into the hands of the people who would act wrongly at the time of the crisis. This is a point which we must consider. But so far as any activity of the Congress is concerned, we must give others the fullest freedom for

expression of opinion. We want free expression of opinion, we want criticisms because it would help the Congress.

27. On Suicides by the Bengal Detenus¹

One after another, they go, finding life too great a burden to carry, shackled and crushed in internment with no limit to their suffering, no hope of a day when this will end.

Two of these detenus, we have been told, have committed suicide within the last few weeks² and Poet Rabindranath Tagore's moving words, demanding a public enquiry, are still ringing in our ears.³

And now comes the news of a third suicide of a detenu, Krishna Pankaj Goswami.⁴ Will this never end? Will dawn never come to put to flight the unending night of their suffering? This problem of the detenus is a public scandal of the first magnitude.

Before the reality of this problem and all that it implies to India, constitutions and elections seem vague and unreal. The only reality is the power that stunts and crushes us.

I trust that Congress committees, civil liberties unions and all other organizations representing public opinion will support and reiterate Dr. Tagore's demand for a public enquiry into these cases of alleged suicide and into the conditions under which the detenus have to live.

That is not enough, for the whole rotten system must go. It is an imposition on us and till it goes and all that it represents, everything else that comes to us will be darkened by its shadow.

1. Statement to the press, Gollagokarannath, 27 November 1936. *The Hindustan Times*, 28 November 1936.
2. On 23 September 1936, Nabajivan Ghosh, a member of the Revolutionary Party, extorted from Midnapur in 1933 and arrested at Calcutta in 1934, committed suicide at Gopalganj police station; and on 17 October 1936, Santosh Chandra Ganguly committed suicide in Deoli detention camp.
3. In a press statement, issued on 21 November 1936, Tagore said: "The fate of a large number of our young men and women is bound up with this system of detention which crushes the body and kills the spirit."
4. A detenu under house arrest in Malda district in north Bengal; committed suicide on 21 November 1936.

28. To Frank P. Manley¹

December 5, 1936

Dear Mr. Manley,²

Thank you for your letter and the reprint of your editorial.³ I remember the incident to which you refer.⁴ I am afraid I may not discuss the many points to which you have referred in your note as this would mean a lengthy controversy for which I have no time. I might mention however that "the calm confidence of the British mind for democratic institutions and freedom of speech and of the press" has not been apparent to me in this country. I suggest that you might make some study of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, both central and provincial, the various press laws, the work of the press censor, the ordinances and detention without trial and so on and so forth. It would also be interesting to see a list of a few hundred organisations in India which are banned. The denial of civil liberty in India has reached such proportions that it is a public scandal of the first magnitude. I was all along under the impression that it is an admitted fact that the British mind does not function democratically in India.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5 (a) (part II)/1936, p. 339, N.M.M.L.

2. Associated with the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, Nellore.

3. In an editorial in the *Baptist Missionary Review*, Manley commended the constitutional way in which Jawaharlal opposed the 1935 Act, that is, by going to the councils and combating it, and Manley thought this was possible in India but not in Russia or Italy.

4. Manley referred to an incident at a railway station, when Jawaharlal escorted an American lady out of a heavy crowd which had collected to see him.

THE CONGRESS AND THE STATES

stress to be varied a little but that is not a vital matter. We seem to be arguing about secondary matters and forgetting the main issue.

As for your saying that 80 million states people will go out of the Congress, this seems to me a very unmeaning and unwise threat. If the 80 million are so vastly excited over it, why do they not set their own houses in order and set about doing something themselves? Do they want to be spoon-fed by others? Of course it is not their fault that they are so weak and helpless today. It is the fault of various circumstances. But it does not help to talk tall and issue ultimatums to the Congress.

The policy of the Congress is criticised. What does the policy of the States' People's Conference amount to? It seems to me very feeble and sometimes even reactionary.

The Congress policy is not of unconcernedness towards the states. It may have been weak occasionally and therefore it is up to us to strengthen it. But the attitude of Congressmen as a whole has been one of positive sympathy with the states people and the desire to co-operate with them whenever opportunity offers itself is always present.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. Congress and the Indian States¹

We have in the past talked and argued a great deal as to our attitude towards the Indian states and the people who live there. Occasionally, this argument has led to heat and excitement. And yet what we have discussed have been relatively trivial issues. The fundamental fact remains that Indian states and the rest of India are one and indivisible and that an Indian, wherever he may live in this vast land of ours, must have the same rights and opportunities—political, economic, social and cultural—as any other Indian. If that is once admitted by all thinking persons, there is little room for argument except on minor

1. Message to the Indian States' People's Conference, Karachi, 18 July 1936.
The Hindustan Times, 19 July 1936.

issues. The problem of the Indian states is not a separate problem standing by itself. It is a part of the larger problem of India. And that is the problem of the freedom of the Indian people.

3. To Kanhaiyalal D. Vaidya¹

August 12, 1936

Dear Friend,²

I have just received your letter of the 7th August.³ I am afraid I must have produced a wrong impression in the minds of the Conference delegates at Karachi. I was not criticizing them but meeting the criticism of the Congress. So far as I am concerned I am quite clear that states peoples should expose in every way the misgovernment and misbehaviour of their princes. Further that they are entitled to the fullest sympathy and support from others outside the states. I congratulate you on the work that your Jhabua State People's Conference has done and the way it has stood up to repression. We shall certainly keep in mind what is happening in Jhabua and give publicity to such news as comes to us. If we have the chance of helping you more we shall gladly take advantage of it.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-70/1936, p. 17, N.M.M.L.

2. Secretary, Central India States' People's Conference and general secretary, Jhabua State People's Conference.

3. Vaidya had written to Jawaharlal on 7 August 1936 that his message to the Karachi conference had given the impression that he thought that Congressmen were doing nothing in the states but crying at the top of their voice from the vantage ground of British India. He also complained that Patel had asked them not to expose the autocracy of the princes.

4. To N. S. Hardikar¹

September 3, 1936

My dear Hardikar,

I am in receipt of your letter of the 28th August.²

The attitude of the Congress towards the Indian states is contained in various resolutions of the Congress with which you are no doubt acquainted. It is true that some confusion had arisen in the past in regard to this attitude. But this confusion has largely been cleared up and in any event the only authoritative direction is contained in Congress resolutions and not in individual utterances. The position today is that the Congress work should be carried on in the states as in the rest of India. It is entirely wrong to say that the Congress or its leaders are not interested in the Indian states or desire that the people of the states should not participate in Congress activities. We are greatly interested in the future of Indian states' subjects and, as the Lucknow Congress resolution on civil liberties declared, we want them to be on a par in regard to political, social and economic conditions with all other people in India.³ In this respect there is no differentiation between them and the others. Therefore it is desirable and necessary that Congress work should be carried on in the Indian states and Congress committees organised there.

In view of the fact, however, that we are not at present inviting conflict with the government or with the Indian states no action should be taken which is in direct conflict with the state government. Should a situation arise where such conflict is feared reference should be made to us for directions. Apart from this question of conflict, every activity

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-27/1936, p. 13, N.M.M.L.

2. In his letter of 28 August 1936, Hardikar complained that the work of Congress organisation in Mysore state had met with opposition from many people who argued that "the leaders who visited the state of Mysore during the last three years" had not cared to sympathise with the people of the state in their Congress activities.

3. The Lucknow Congress resolution on civil liberties read: "...the Congress deeply regrets that in the Indian states there is a similar suppression of civil and personal liberties, and, in many of them, conditions in this respect are even worse than in the rest of India and almost every kind of liberty is non-existent.... The Congress declares that it can recognise no differentiation in personal, civil and democratic liberties as between the states and the rest of India."

of the Congress should be carried on in the states, especially the enrolment of members and formation of Congress committees.

You are at liberty to give publicity to this letter.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

THE ELECTION MANIFESTO

1. The Task of the Congress¹

When I returned from England, I did not know much about the conditions in the country and I was told that a feeling of despair had paralysed the people. My tours have convinced me that this is not the correct position. While I found a feeling of oppression among the people owing to the government's repressive policy, growing unemployment and the economic crisis, I could discern beneath apparent despair a feeling of optimism and enthusiasm. The people say that the Congress has been suppressed but my tours have convinced me that this is not correct. What has happened is that despair caused by economic crisis and unemployment and aggravated by repression had made the people temporarily inactive, but I am not prepared to call this the suppression of the Congress, because beneath this apparent despair is the will to be free and a spirit of resistance. The masses are still enthusiastic and will be ready for action whenever called upon to do so. I feel confident that the Congress is growing stronger and stronger.

I know our country is passing through difficult times because of floods and droughts, but, despite all this, the people are quite enthusiastic, which after all is the test by which you can judge the preparedness of the people to be free. The Congress has done many things in the past and will continue to do so.

Some important items like the agrarian programme and the mass contact committee report cannot be placed before you just now. But the election manifesto is before you and this is the most important thing at present engaging attention, although three or four months ahead of elections. There are a lot of difficulties in the way of parliamentary activities.

You are aware of the ban placed on the Frontier Gandhi and the detention of Mr. Subhas Bose. The only way, whereby these can be removed, is by strengthening ourselves.

You all know about the Trichinopoly municipal election incident.² We are really surprised that such things should happen among Congressmen. It is a matter for all of us to carefully consider and think out ways, whereby a repetition of such things can be avoided.

1. Speech at the A.I.C.C., Bombay, 22 August 1936. From *The Tribune*, 23 August 1936.
2. T.S.S. Rajan, a prominent Congressman of Tamil Nadu, had supported a non-Congress candidate for the chairmanship of the Tiruchchirappalli municipal council, and as a result Rajagopalachari resigned from the Congress.

I earnestly hope that though we intensely feel Mr. Rajagopalachari's separation, Mr. Rajagopalachari will greatly help us in putting a stop to indiscipline. We may have differences of opinion inside the Congress; but once a Congress authority decides, we must accept the decision. We must all beware of the reaction to any act of indiscipline in the country. We must all think in terms of the country as a whole and bigger issues.

I felt Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan's resignation acutely. Mr. Jayaprakash did not like the idea of being a member of the Working Committee without his being a member of the A.I.C.C. Hence the resignation.

The elections are ahead; we will put all our strength towards the achieving of the desired results. There are two forces in the country, one wanting to take the people towards independence and the other for maintaining the present order. The parties, other than the Congress, talk too much, promise to do a great many things, but experience has shown that they always cooperate with British imperialism. We should see that no harm is done to the freedom movement.

You all know there is a lot of difference between the view you hold and mine; but I try to bring our forces together, because our aim is to tackle British imperialism. Some of my comrades have some objection to my preaching socialism; what can I do but to explain whatever I feel. I have explained, with the view of mine and others before me and with anxiety not to weaken the Congress strength, which I have worked for. If you have any complaint tell me. Whatever is your command I will never go against it.

Two of our colleagues have resigned from the Working Committee. I do not like the system of choosing the members of the Working Committee. I feel intensely about it. I hope the new Congress will amend the constitution so that the President is authorised to choose his own Working Committee. I am helpless in that the Lucknow Congress decided against my views. Of course we have continued for four months and I do not find it difficult to continue for four more months. But the views of the Working Committee members should be similar. It should be a perfect team. I, therefore, leave it to the A.I.C.C. to make a selection of two members. I would not mind if the choice falls on two women, but I would urge that at least one woman be selected.³

3. On 4 September 1936 G.B. Pant and Sarojini Naidu were made members of the Working Committee.

2. The Congress Election Manifesto¹

For more than fifty years the Indian National Congress has laboured for the freedom of India, and ever, as its strength grew and it came to represent more and more the nationalist urge of the Indian people and their desire to put an end to exploitation by British imperialism, it came into conflict with the ruling power. During recent years the Congress has led great movements for national freedom and has sought to develop sanctions whereby such freedom can be achieved by peaceful mass action and the disciplined sacrifice and suffering of the Indian people. To the lead of the Congress the Indian people have responded in an abundant measure and thus confirmed their inherent right to freedom. That struggle for freedom still continues and must continue till India is free and independent.

These years have seen the development of an economic crisis in India and the world which has led to a progressive deterioration in the condition of all classes of our people. The poverty-stricken masses are today in the grip of an even more abject poverty and destitution, and this growing disease urgently and insistently demands a radical remedy. Poverty and unemployment have long been the lot of our peasantry and industrial workers; today they cover and crush other classes also—the artisan, the trader, the small merchant, the middle class intelligentsia. For the vast millions of our countrymen the problem of achieving national independence has become an urgent one, for only independence can give us the power to solve our economic and social problems and end the exploitation of our masses.

The growth of the national movement and the economic crisis have resulted in the intense repression of the Indian people and the suppression of civil liberties, and the British Government has sought to strengthen the imperialist bonds that envelop India and to perpetuate the domination and exploitation of the Indian people by enacting the Government of India Act of 1935.

In the international sphere crisis follows crisis in an ever-deepening degree and world war hangs over the horizon. The Lucknow Congress called the attention of the nation to this grave situation in India and the world, and declared its opposition to the participation of India in

1. 22 August 1936. A.I.C.C. File No. 42/1936, pp. 629-641. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, (London, 1941), pp. 401-405. The manifesto was drafted by Jawaharlal.

an imperialist war and its firm resolve to continue the struggle for the independence of India.

The Congress rejected in its entirety the constitution imposed upon India by the new Act and declared that no constitution imposed by outside authority and no constitution which curtails the sovereignty of the people of India, and does not recognise their right to shape and control fully their political and economic future, can be accepted. Such a constitution, in its opinion, must be based on the independence of India as a nation and it can only be framed by a constituent assembly.

The Congress has always laid stress on the development of the strength of the people and the forging of sanctions to enforce the people's will. To this end it has carried on activities outside the legislatures. The Congress holds that real strength comes from thus organising and serving the masses.

Adhering to this policy and objective, but in view of the present situation and in order to prevent the operation of forces calculated to strengthen alien domination and exploitation, the Congress decides to contest seats in the coming elections for the provincial legislatures. But the purpose of sending Congressmen to the legislatures under the new Act is not to cooperate in any way with the Act but to combat it and seek to end it. It is to carry out, in so far as is possible, the Congress policy of rejection of the Act, and to resist British imperialism in its attempts to strengthen its hold on India and its exploitation of the Indian people. In the opinion of the Congress, activity in the legislatures should be such as to help in the work outside, in the strengthening of the people, and in the development of the sanctions which are essential to freedom.

The new legislatures, hedged and circumscribed by safeguards and special powers for the protection of British and other vested interests, cannot yield substantial benefits, and they are totally incapable of solving the vital problems of poverty and unemployment. But they may well be used by British imperialism for its own purposes to the disadvantage and injury of the Indian people. The Congress representatives will seek to resist this, and to take all possible steps to end the various regulations, ordinances and acts which oppress the Indian people and smother their will to freedom. They will work for the establishment of civil liberty, for the release of political prisoners and detainees, and to repair the wrongs done to the peasantry and to public institutions in the course of the national struggle.

The Congress realises that independence cannot be achieved through these legislatures, nor can the problem of poverty and unemployment be effectively tackled by them. Nevertheless the Congress places its

general programme before the people of India so that they may know what it stands for and what it will try to achieve, whenever it has the power to do so.

At the Karachi session of the Congress in 1931 the general Congress objective was defined in the fundamental rights resolution. That general definition still holds. The last five years of developing crisis have, however, necessitated a further consideration of the problems of poverty and unemployment and other economic problems. With a view to this the Lucknow Congress laid particular stress on the fact that "the most important and urgent problem of the country is the appalling poverty, unemployment and indebtedness of the peasantry, fundamentally due to antiquated and repressive land tenure and revenue systems, and intensified in recent years by the great slump in prices of agricultural produce", and called upon the provincial Congress committees to frame full agrarian programmes. The agrarian programme which will be drawn up by the A.I.C.C. on the basis of these provincial programmes will be issued later.

Pending the formulation of a fuller programme, the Congress reiterates its declaration made at Karachi—that it stands for a reform of the system of land tenure and revenue and rent and an equitable adjustment of the burden on agricultural land, giving immediate relief to the smaller peasantry by a substantial reduction of agricultural rent and revenue now paid by them and exempting uneconomic holdings from payment of rent and revenue.

The question of indebtedness requires urgent consideration and the formulation of a scheme including the declaration of a moratorium, an enquiry into and scaling down of debts and the provision for cheap credit facilities by the state. This relief should extend to the agricultural tenants, peasant proprietors, small landholders and petty traders.

In regard to industrial workers the policy of the Congress is to secure to them a decent standard of living, hours of work and conditions of labour in conformity, as far as the economic conditions in the country permit, with international standards, suitable machinery for the settlement of disputes between employers and workmen, protection against the economic consequences of old age, sickness and unemployment and the right of workers to form unions and to strike for the protection of their interests.

The Congress has already declared that it stands for the removal of all sex disabilities, whether legal or social, in any sphere of public activity. It has expressed itself in favour of maternity benefits and the protection of women workers. The women of India have already taken a leading part in the freedom struggle, and the Congress looks forward to

their sharing, in an equal measure with the men of India, the privileges and obligations of citizens of a free India.

The stress that the Congress has laid on the removal of untouchability and for the social and economic uplift of the Harijans and the backward classes is well known. It holds that they should be equal citizens with others, with equal rights in all civic matters.

The encouragement of khadi and village industries has also long been a principal plank of the Congress programme. In regard to the larger industries, protection should be given but the rights of the workers and the producers of raw materials should be safeguarded, and due regard should be paid to the interests of village industries.

The treatment of political prisoners has long been a scandal in India. Every effort should be made to improve this and make it humane. It is equally necessary to change the whole basis of the prison administration so that every prisoner might be treated in a humanitarian and rational manner.

The communal decision, which forms part of the new Act, has led to much controversy and the Congress attitude towards it has been misunderstood by some people. The rejection in its entirety of the new Act by the Congress inevitably involves the rejection of the communal decision. Even apart from the Act as a whole, the communal decision is wholly unacceptable as being inconsistent with independence and the principle of democracy; it encourages fissiparous and disruptive tendencies, hinders the normal growth and consideration of economic and social questions, is a barrier to national progress, and strikes at the root of Indian unity. No community or group in India profits by it in any real sense, for the larger injury caused by it to all outweighs the petty benefits that some have received. Ultimately it probably injures most those groups whom it is meant to favour. The only party that profits by it is the third party which rules and exploits us.

The attitude of the Congress is, therefore, not one of indifference or neutrality. It disapproves strongly of the communal decision and would like to end it. But the Congress has repeatedly laid stress on the fact that a satisfactory solution of the communal question can come only through the goodwill and cooperation of the principal communities concerned. An attempt by one group to get some communal favour from the British Government at the expense of another group results in an increase of communal tension and exploitation of both groups by the government. Such a policy is hardly in keeping with the dignity of Indian nationalism; it does not fit in with the struggle for independence. It does not pay either party in the long run; it side-tracks the main issue.

The Congress, therefore, holds that the right way to deal with the situation created by the communal decision is to intensify our struggle for independence and, at the same time, to seek a common basis for an agreed solution which helps to strengthen the unity of India. The effort of one community only to change the decision in the face of the opposition of another community might well result in confirming and consolidating that decision, for conflict between the two produces the very situation which gives government a chance of enforcing such a decision. The Congress thus is of opinion that such one-sided agitation can bear no useful result.

It is necessary to bear in mind that the whole communal problem, in spite of its importance, has nothing to do with the major problems of India—poverty and widespread unemployment. It is not a religious problem and it affects only a handful of people at the top. The peasantry, the workers, the traders and merchants and the lower middle class of all communities are in no way touched by it and their burdens remain.

The question of accepting ministries or not in the new legislatures was postponed for a decision by the Lucknow Congress. The A.I.C.C. is of opinion that it will be desirable for this decision to be taken after the elections. Whatever the decision on this question might be, it must be remembered that, in any event, the Congress stands for the rejection of the new Act, and for no cooperation in its working. The object remains the same—the ending of the Act. With a view to this end every endeavour will be made to prevent the introduction and functioning of the federal part of the scheme, which is intended to perpetuate the domination of imperialist interests and the feudal interests of the states over the whole country and prevent all progress towards freedom. It must be borne in mind that the new provincial assemblies will form the electorate for the proposed federal central legislature and the composition of those provincial legislatures will materially affect the fate of the federal constitution.

We appeal to the country to give every support to the Congress in the elections that are coming. National welfare demands it. The fight for independence calls for it. The effectiveness of the work that the Congress members of the legislatures will do will depend on their numbers and their discipline and the backing and support that the country gives them. With a clear majority they will be in a position to fight the Act and to help effectively in the struggle for independence. Every party and group that stands aloof from the Congress organisation tends, knowingly or unknowingly, to become a source of weakness to the nation and a source of strength to the forces ranged against

it. For the fight for independence a joint front is necessary. The Congress offers that joint national front which comprises all classes and communities, bound together by their desire to free India, end the exploitation of her people, and build up a strong and prosperous and united nation, resting on the well-being of the masses.

With this great and inspiring goal before us, for which so many men and women of India have suffered and sacrificed their all under the banner of the Congress, and for which today thousands of our countrymen are suffering silently and with brave endurance, we call upon our people with full hope and confidence to rally to the cause of the Congress, of India, of freedom.

3. Concluding Address to the A. I. C. C.¹

I request the members of the All India Congress Committee to forward any details regarding the curbing of civil liberties to the office of the All India Congress Committee. Already some information has been received but further details are needed. I pay my tributes to Mr. Ram Manohar Lohia in charge of the foreign relations department and Dr. Ashraf, secretary, and Dr. Khwaja Hamied,² under-secretary of the political and economic information department.

Bhai Parmanand in a speech has made allegations against Indian women who participate in the Congress movement.³ It is a disgraceful speech. There are several things which cannot be tolerated, and what Bhai Parmanand has done is one such. He ought to have expressed an apology and withdrawn such an offensive statement.

1. Bombay, 23 August 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 24 August 1936.
2. K.A. Hamied (1898-1972); member, Bombay Legislative Council, 1937-62; sheriff of Bombay, 1952-53; Fellow of the Royal Institute of Chemistry, London.
3. In a statement published in his Urdu daily *Hindu* of 6 August 1936 Bhai Parmanand had said that all the Congresswomen who courted arrest during the civil disobedience movements had not been sincere and honest and refused to withdraw his remarks at a public meeting held at Delhi on 8 August and at Kanpur on 11 August as a result of which the two meetings were disrupted.

I am told that asking questions at public meetings and creating uproar means curtailment of civil liberties. I do not agree with this view. And this shows that there are people who do not understand what is meant by civil liberty. Certainly the audience should observe decorum at public meetings. But if the speakers at such meetings go on making outrageous statements, and if the speakers refuse to answer questions the audience has a right to protest. It does not mean curtailment of civil liberties.

4. Full Steam Ahead¹

Question. What has been the outcome of the A.I.C.C. meeting?

Jawaharlal Nehru: The All India Congress Committee has demonstrated afresh the fundamental unity of the national movement in India. It has also shown again that this movement is essentially based on anti-imperialism and has little use for the petty reforms which are sometimes proffered to us to weaken our urge for independence and to dull our resentment against foreign domination.

Whatever differences might exist among those who seek the freedom of the Indian people, they stand shoulder to shoulder in this great struggle and there will come to their ranks all those who stand for Indian independence and for the removal of the exploitation of her people.

The All India Congress Committee has given a lead to Congress workers in general and has laid stress on the urgent need for discipline in our ranks and a high standard of public life. I trust that all Congressmen will pay heed to this direction and advice and will close up their ranks for a common fight.

To the people of Tamil Nadu in particular, I venture to make this appeal, especially as their affairs came before us in Bombay. After the retirement of Sjt. C. Rajagopalachariar—which I hope is temporary—they have a special responsibility.

1. Interview in Bombay, 25 August 1936. From *The Bombay Chronicle*, 26 August 1936.

To all Congressmen I would appeal to remember always the high standards of public life, which have been associated with the name of the Congress. We may not lower those standards even for the sake of a temporary success at an election.

Success does not lie in winning an election by lowering our standards but by displaying that we adhere to our ideals, whatever the consequences.

The All India Congress Committee has said "Full Steam Ahead". Let all Congressmen take heed of this and be worthy of the country's trust and honour.

5. To Ammu Swaminadhan¹

September 2, 1936

Dear Mrs. Swaminadhan,²

I am in receipt of your letter of the 22nd August enclosing a manifesto issued by your Conference to candidates for the coming elections.³

The Congress proposes to set up women candidates for the seats reserved for them in the provincial legislatures in the coming elections. It is possible that some women candidates may also be set up from the general constituencies. This matter is in the hands of the All India Parliamentary Board and the various provincial parliamentary boards. So far as I know no final decisions have yet been arrived at. The provincial boards are supposed to recommend names to the All India Parliamentary Board which thereupon sends its recommendations to the Congress Working Committee. I would suggest your getting into touch with the All India Parliamentary Board as well as, where possible, with the provincial boards to find out the names of the women candidates.

I have read your manifesto and I am glad to inform you that we accept every proposal that it contains. The manifesto refers to many

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-48/1936, pp. 1-2, N.M.M.L.

2. (b. 1894); member of the Congress since 1930; founder-member, All India Women's Conference; secretary, All India Women's Conference, 1936; member, Central Legislative Assembly, 1945; member, Constituent Assembly; member, Lok Sabha, 1952-57.

3. She had requested Jawaharlal to give the list of names of women candidates nominated.

matters with which, I suppose, almost everyone in India agrees, whatever his political persuasions, such as educational reforms, rural reconstruction, communal unity, etc. The really important item is the removal of sex disabilities, whether legal or social or in any sphere of public activities. This has long been a plank in the Congress programme and you will find it in the Karachi resolution of the Congress on fundamental rights. You will further find it in the recent manifesto issued by the All India Congress Committee. So also maternity benefits and social insurance.

The removal of untouchability is also a vital plank in the Congress programme. The protection of civil liberties has long been agitated for by us.

Everyone will of course agree with the removal of immoral traffic in women and children, the protection of children and young people from the evils of drugs, drink, tobacco, exploitation and cruelty, and adequate measures to cope with social diseases, leprosy and cancer. The formation of a national tuberculosis association seems to be desirable but it is more a method of tackling this grave menace.

As regards unemployment, the way in which it is mentioned in your manifesto indicates only a wish that something should be done. With that of course everyone will agree. But how it is to be done is another matter. Many of us think that the only way of tackling it effectively is by introducing vital changes in our economic system.

I do not think the Congress has ever passed a resolution on the question of *purdah* or polygamy or early marriage. But as a matter of fact Congressmen and Congresswomen have in the past done a great deal against *purdah* and early marriage and I have no doubt that they will continue these efforts. Polygamy has so far not become a live issue, partly because, I suppose, it does not exist to any large extent. But we should certainly try to put an end to it.

You will thus notice that we are at one with you in your programme. But I feel that many items in your programme are, if I may say so, superficial in the sense that they do not enquire into the root causes of the evils which we want to get rid of. Partly no doubt these evils are due to our own customs, but largely they are the consequences of political subjection and a thoroughly bad economic system. Thus we are forced to consider the political problem as well as the economic problem in its many ramifications. The first step inevitably becomes political independence. And to that end the Congress is devoting its thought and energy. However much we may wish for many reforms we feel our efforts will be wasted if we cannot gain real power to bring about these reforms.

I trust that your Conference will also realise the necessity for political freedom in order to give full effect to the social and economic freedom of women, and will make this clear in your manifesto. This of course does not mean that you should lay less stress on your specific demands for women.

I trust your Conference will cooperate with the Congress in the various common activities in which we are interested and specially in the larger struggle for national freedom.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

6. Line up with the Congress¹

In the Congress election manifesto it was stated that "every party and group that stands aloof from the Congress organisation tends, knowingly or unknowingly, to become a source of weakness to the nation and a source of strength to the forces ranged against it." Every day brings justification for this statement and proof of the fact that the real contest is between two forces—the Congress as representing the will to freedom of the nation, and the British Government in India and its supporters who oppose this urge and try to suppress it. Intermediate groups, whatever virtue they may possess, fade out or line up with one of the principal forces. In this way we find the world struggle represented in India, the struggle between progress and reaction, between fascism and anti-fascism, between imperialism and national freedom.

For those who have any appreciation of this mighty struggle in the world and in our own country, the choice is clear. To hesitate and to adopt an intermediate position is to injure the cause they have at heart. They must support the Congress. There are no doubt estimable people in other groups, but, whether these are political or communal, inevitably they weaken the national front. It is because of this that the Congress claims the allegiance of the Indian people and calls

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 18 September 1936. *The Hindustan Times*, 21 September 1936.

upon them to support it and not to fritter away their strength by allying themselves with parties and groups which may even approach it in many ways, but which really weaken it by providing a separate platform or by laying stress on communal or other issues. The issue for India is that of independence. He who is for it must be with the Congress and if he talks in terms of communalism he is not keen on independence. He who is not for it, inevitably drifts to the side of the government.

Let this position be clearly understood by our people as it has been understood and acted upon by the government. For the government there is only one principal opponent—the Congress. All else are to be preferred to the Congress. We have seen this policy in action all over the country and the matter has been repeatedly raised in the Legislative Assembly. As further proof of this policy of governmental interference, I have been shown an interesting official document issued by the United Provinces Court of Wards to all district officers in the U.P. I give this circular below for your information.²

This is the official attitude and all of us who have moved about among the people know how subordinate officials are acting up to it. What answer can the people of India give to it? There is only one possible answer, only one dignified answer, and that is for all of us, to sink our petty differences and line up with the Congress.

2. Not printed. The U.P. Court of Wards, "representing important agricultural interests", had sent a circular to its officials to use their influence "to prevent the election of candidates who belonged to the Congress Party."

7. Circular to P. C. Cs¹

September 23, 1936

Dear Comrade,

I write to ask you what steps you have taken to broadcast the Congress election manifesto in your province. This document is the rock on which we have to build our election campaign and should therefore be given the widest publicity in the language of your province. It should be remembered that essential and integral parts of the manifesto are

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-1/1936, p. 85, N.M.M.L.

the Karachi resolution on fundamental rights and the Lucknow resolution on the agrarian programme. Both these should always be printed together with the body of the manifesto.

As publicity to this manifesto must largely be given in the language of the province, we are not sending you any considerable number of copies of it. But we shall send you soon some copies in English. In case you want more you will please let us know. Please send us translations of the manifesto which you may have issued.

You have been receiving from us our various newsletters and bulletins, some meant for foreign countries, others for India. You must have appreciated the value of these. We shall be continuing these and probably we shall extend the scope of such periodical surveys. We want our district and town committees to profit by such surveys and we would gladly send them direct to the districts if they would write to us for them. We propose to make a small charge covering postage etc. Will you kindly address your district and town committees on this subject and inform them of our offer?

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

8. To V. K. Krishna Menon¹

September 28, 1936

My dear Krishna,

Your letter of the 19th September. I shall await your report on Brussels.

In your last few letters you have given expression to a certain irritation with "hobnobbing with ministerialism", a proper subject for irritation. Further you go on to say that it is bad politics and worse strategy. And then "who am I to offer advice to the President of the Congress." The President of the Congress is not above receiving advice from anybody. In particular I expect both advice and criticism from you all the time. But I think you might give the President of the Congress a little credit for some glimmering of sense. You seem to imagine that I am responsible for this hobnobbing with this ministerialism, or, at any rate,

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

that I am neutral about it. As a matter of fact the whole position in India has changed very greatly during the last six months on this subject. At the time of the Lucknow Congress, acceptance of ministries was a dead certainty as far as the Congress was concerned. Today it is a very doubtful proposition. The whole background is changed as you can see from the Congress election manifesto. It is true that that manifesto does not decide this issue, and its postponement is not a good thing for us. Do you think I was in favour of postponement till after the elections?

Try to imagine what the human material is in India—how they think, how they act, what moves them, what does not affect them. It is easy enough to take up a theoretically correct attitude which has little effect on anybody. We have to do something much more important and difficult and that is to move large numbers of people to make them act and to do all this without breaking up the Congress. I must say that the results of the last six months have been quite extraordinary.

You may have heard of the police search of the Congress office. It is evident that they do not like our newsletters. I have written on this subject as well as some others to Stafford Cripps² and James Middleton.³ I enclose copy of the letter I have sent them.⁴ Also I enclose a copy of the letter I have addressed to the District Magistrate, Allahabad.⁵ These two letters will give you all the information on the subject. You can make such use of it as you like. Please find out from Cripps and Middleton if they have received my letters. One never knows....

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. Richard Stafford Cripps (1889-1952); eminent lawyer who was on the left-wing of the Labour Party; was a personal friend of Jawaharlal; visited India in 1939 as the guest of Jawaharlal; British ambassador in Moscow, 1940-42; negotiated War Cabinet declaration on India, March-April 1942; member, Cabinet Mission to India, 1946; President of the Board of Trade, 1945-47; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1947-50.
3. Secretary, Labour Party, 1934-44.
4. This letter is not available.
5. See *post*, section 12, item 29.

9. On the Selection of Congress Candidates¹

We have noticed with some apprehension the tendency of some Congress committees to recommend as candidates for the ensuing provincial elections persons whose past record and even present activities have been opposed to the Congress. We have laid stress previously, and we wish to do so again, that the quality of the candidates, from the point of view of Congress policy, is more important than the winning of seats and the capture of a fictitious majority in the legislatures. This Congress policy has been laid down clearly in the election manifesto of the A.I.C.C. It is "not to cooperate in any way with the Act but to combat it and seek to end it. It is to carry out, in so far as is possible, the Congress policy of rejection of the Act, and to resist British imperialism in its attempts to strengthen its hold on India and its exploitation of the Indian people." Only such persons can be chosen as Congress candidates for election as believe in this policy fully and are prepared to carry it out. In the words of the Lucknow Congress resolution, "such candidates must be chosen from those who fully support the Congress objective of Indian independence and pledge themselves to carry out its policy in regard to the legislatures." Such pledges may not be lightly or unknowingly undertaken. We trust, therefore, that all candidates who have already been nominated will bear this in mind, and if any of them consider it necessary to reconsider their decision in view of this fact, they should do so. All candidates must be chosen on this basis.

We have also noticed with regret that certain conflicts have arisen in some places among Congressmen themselves as to who should be the Congress candidate. We should like to remind Congressmen that the real struggle for freedom will not be carried on inside the legislatures but outside. In the words of the election manifesto, "real strength comes from thus organising and serving the masses." This all important work demands the continuous attention and the active service of all Congressmen. There is no limit to the number of persons who are required to do so.

1. This statement was issued by Jawaharlal, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Jammalal Bajaj at Wardha on 17 November 1936. *The Hindu*, 18 November 1936.

THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN III

1. Students and Politics¹

India at present is a peculiar country and the questions that are raised surprise one. Some even argue that the independence of India is bad for India; that something less than independence is in reality more than it. Not being metaphysically inclined I find some difficulty in understanding these abstruse problems. Yet another peculiar question relates to students and politics. Students must not take part in politics, some say. What is politics? According to the usual interpretation in India (official India), to assist or support the government in any way is not politics; but it is politics to criticise or work against the existing order in India.

Who are the students? They may be children in the elementary schools or young men and women in colleges. Obviously the same considerations cannot apply to both.

Quite a large number of senior students today possess a vote for the coming provincial elections. To vote is to take part in politics; to vote intelligently necessitates the understanding of political issues; to understand political issues results usually in accepting a certain political policy; and if one accepts that policy it is the duty of the citizen to push that policy, to try to convert others to it. Thus inevitably a voter must be a politician, and he should be an ardent politician if he is a keen citizen. Only those who lack the political or social sense can remain passive and neutral or indifferent.

Even apart from his duty as a voter, every student must, if he is properly trained, prepare himself for life and its problems. Otherwise his education has been wasted effort. Politics and economics deal with these problems and no person is properly educated unless he understands them. Perhaps it is difficult for most people to see a clear path through life's jungle. But whether we know the solution of the problem or not, we must at least know the nature of it. What are the questions that life puts to us? The answers may be difficult, but the curious thing is that people seek to answer without knowing the real questions. No serious or thinking student can take up this futile attitude.

The various isms that play such an important part in the world today—nationalism, liberalism, socialism, communism, imperialism, fascism,

1. Allahabad, 1 October 1936. First published in the *Students' Tribune*, Lahore. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 51-55.

etc.—are efforts on the part of various groups to answer these questions. Which answer is correct? Or are they all steeped in error? In any event we have to choose and in order to choose we must know and have the capacity to choose correctly. This cannot be done if there are repressions and suppressions of thought and action. It cannot be done properly if High Authority sits on us and prevents the free play of the mind.

Thus it becomes necessary for all thinking individuals, and more so for the student than for others, to take the fullest theoretical part in politics. Naturally this will apply to the senior students at life's threshold rather than the junior ones who are still far from these problems. But a theoretical consideration is not enough for a proper understanding; even theory requires practice. From the point of view of study alone the student must leave his lecture halls and investigate reality in village and town, in field and factory; to take part to some extent in the various activities of the people, including political activities.

One has ordinarily to draw the line somewhere. A student's first business is to train his mind and body and make them efficient instruments for thought, understanding and action. Before he is trained he cannot think or act effectively. Yet the training itself comes not from listening to pious advice, but by indulging in action to some extent. That action, under normal conditions, must be subordinated to the theoretical training. But it cannot be eliminated or else the training itself is deficient.

It is our misfortune that in India our educational system is thoroughly lop-sided. But an even greater misfortune is the highly authoritarian atmosphere that surrounds it. Not in education alone, but everywhere in India, red-liveried, pompous and often empty-headed Authority seeks to mould people after its own pattern and prevent the growth of the mind and the spread of ideas. Recently we have seen how this Authority has made a mess of things even in the realm of sport and our cricket team in England, full of brilliant players, was effectively hamstrung by the ignorant nobodies who controlled it.² Genius was sacrificed so that Authority might triumph. In our universities this spirit of authority reigns supreme and, in the name of discipline, comes down heavily on any who do not meekly obey. They do not like the qualities that are encouraged in free countries, the spirit of daring, the adventures of the soul in uncharted regions. Is it surprising then that we do not produce many men and women who seek to conquer the

2. In June 1936 the famous cricketer Amarnath was expelled from the Indian team touring England by its manager Brittain Jones as a "disciplinary measure".

Poles or Everest, to control the elements and bring them to man's use, to hurl defiance at man's ignorance and timidity and inertia and littleness and try to raise him up to the stars?

Must students take part in politics? Must they take part in life, a full wholesome part in life's varied activities, or be of the clerkly breed, carrying out orders from above? As students they cannot keep out of politics, as Indian students even more so they must keep touch with them. Yet it is true that normally the training of their minds and bodies must be their principal consideration during this period of their growth. They must observe a certain discipline but that discipline should not be such as crushes the mind and kills the spirit.

So, normally. But abnormal conditions come when all normal rules are swept away. During the Great War where were the students of England, France, Germany? Not in their colleges but in the trenches, facing and meeting death. Where are the students of Spain today?

A subject country is always to some extent in an abnormal condition. So India is today. And in considering these problems we must also consider our environment and the growing abnormality in the world. And as we seek to understand it, we are driven to take part, however little it might be, in the shaping of events.

2. To Sarat Chandra Bose¹

Camp Wardha
October 4, 1936

My dear Sarat,

As I was leaving Allahabad I received your letter of the 30th. A copy of it has met me here.

I have discussed the matter with Vallabhbhai and Rajendra Babu and we are clearly of opinion that the interpretation put upon the Congress election manifesto by the Bengal P.C.C. was not justified.² You refer to your letter of the 31st August.³ I have not that letter by me here but I would like to inform you that previous to that I wrote

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-24(i)/1936, pp. 89-90, N.M.M.L.

2. Sarat Bose in his letter of 30 September 1936 had justified the interpretation.

3. In his letter of 31 August 1936, he had warned that if the Working Committee banned the agitation by the Congress in Bengal against the communal decision, Congress unity in Bengal would be destroyed.

on several occasions to the Bengal P.C.C. on this very subject and made it clear what our attitude was. Further I asked them what their position was vis-a-vis the then Nationalist Party of Bengal. It seemed to me then that they were gradually converting themselves into the Nationalist Party. That fear seems to me even more justified now after the last decision of the B.P.C.C.

We are all very glad to learn that there has been a friendly arrangement between the rival groups in Bengal. This is indeed good news. But to some extent I have a feeling that this arrangement amounts to this: that the Nationalist Party has swallowed the Congress in Bengal.

I shall not here discuss further the justification of your interpretation. I hope to do so when we meet. But I still trust that your committee will see its way to vary its interpretation and bring itself into line with the A.I.C.C. and the Congress organisation as a whole.

I have been very anxious, as you know, to visit Bengal to have full talks with you as well as other friends and colleagues there. I wanted to do so to discuss this communal affair as well as to know from you and others what your grievances against the Working Committee have been during the past few years. I think there must be a lot of misapprehension in this matter and it would be a good thing if we could discuss this matter frankly so as to remove these misapprehensions. Unfortunately I have not been able to visit Bengal in spite of my desire to do so. But after my return from the south I want to take the earliest opportunity of going to Calcutta. I propose reaching there on the 1st November and staying there for about 5 days. I think I had better remain in Calcutta all this time and not go to any other part of Bengal.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. Message to Karnataka¹

I understand that the Karnataka is inaugurating the election campaign soon. I send our workers my good wishes on this occasion and I trust

1. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 5 October 1936. Out of a number of such messages issued by Jawaharlal to various parts of India a representative selection has been included.

that they will carry the message of the Congress—the message of Indian independence and the ending of the exploitation of the Indian people—to every corner of their province. The Congress has undertaken to run candidates for elections to the provincial legislatures and we propose to fight these elections with all our strength and I am sure that all over India we shall succeed. But greater than any temporary success in elections is our adherence to our ideals and objectives. We may not lower them whatever happens. It is because of them that the Congress has become the symbol of Indian unity, of independence and Indian freedom and it is because of them that we hope to gain our objectives.

Seldom has a greater crisis overshadowed the world than that which confronts us today. And the future may well test the capacity and nerves of the stoutest amongst us. We must bear that in mind and remember that the only way to meet these great dangers and difficulties is to have a powerful and well managed organisation which has clear ideas and objectives and the courage and discipline to stand by them, even when danger threatens. That organisation is the Congress. And therefore it is up to all of us to stand under the banner of the Congress, to strengthen it and to make it the living and vital embodiment of India's will to unity and freedom. I hope that the people of the Karnataka will stand by the Congress today and tomorrow as they have done in the past and that they will not only ensure the return of the Congress candidates at the elections, but will prepare themselves for the greater task to come.

4. Women and the Freedom Movement¹

Madame President,² and Sisters,

Yesterday a girl asked me what I was going to say at this meeting and at the spur of the moment I said I might advise them not to be too womanly. Then of course I corrected myself by saying that they should not be too womanish. I think that instead of entering into the deep waters of women's representation in the legislatures and the local bodies

1. Madras, 6 October 1936. *The Hindu*, (evening edition) 6 October 1936.

2. Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi.

in the country I would much prefer to talk to you about other and more fundamental matters affecting women. I do not know how many of you have heard the famous saying of a French writer to the effect, that if you want to judge the culture and civilisation of a people, you can find that out by the status and condition of the women of the country. You need not look round to see what the men are about, if you find that the women of that country are cultured and civilised and highly advanced in the various walks of life. If the women are backward, that nation is backward. That is, in my opinion, a very important way of judging a nation's advancement.

Many of us in India, as well as elsewhere—because the women's question is not purely an Indian question, although it may concern us here for the time being—are apt to think much more in terms of men who function at the top, who may be advanced and who may be great and forget the part that the women are playing. I should like you, and not only you, because you may take it easily enough, I should like the men of India to apply those scales now and always to the state of affairs in India. What is the condition of the women, what are the women doing, what opening and opportunities have they got, and what disabilities are they labouring under? If you view the matter from that point of view, inevitably not only will women go up, but the whole nation will go up including the men.

It is pretty obvious that if in a country the population is more or less backward, not advanced, that country cannot go very far. That backward population will drag it down. We are thinking in terms of women without whom it is quite impossible to go ahead. That applies to many backward classes in the population. If you have large sections—you may call them backward classes, depressed classes, Harijans or economically poor classes—if we have a large proportion of people who have not got opportunities to advance, to go ahead and live normal and natural lives, then that country cannot go very far. You may occasionally produce great men even out of a muddy soil. But the fact remains that you will have to remove the mud before you can have a sane and sober living for the great majority of the people. Therefore whether you look at it from the point of view of women, who have for a long time been the depressed classes in India and in the world, or in terms of other classes of men and women, who are economically and otherwise depressed, we have to remove those bars and give equal opportunity, equal privileges to all of them before we can have an advanced nation.

We are too much in the habit of looking back and praising the past. We are entitled to do that, because there are many things in our past

history and culture which are praiseworthy and for which we can take legitimate pride. But that is a bad habit, all the same, to be looking back all the time. In the same way, sometimes I think there is a bit too much talk of Sita and Savitri and the like, estimable ladies no doubt, who played a very brave part and who have become traditional heroines for us. It is right that we should have such heroes and heroines in our national calendar and in our traditions, but we cannot live on tradition alone. Nor can we live on the reputation acquired by ancient heroes and heroines, quite apart from the fact that we cannot entirely apply those examples to modern conditions. Conditions change. While we may take inspiration from the good qualities that the ancient heroes and heroines possessed, we cannot exactly copy everything that might have been done in those times because times have utterly changed.

I said a while ago something about the depressed classes. As a matter of fact, we all, men and women of this country, belong to the depressed classes, because in every country, which is a subject country, the people dominated over inevitably are the depressed and the exploited. Therefore when we talk in terms of getting rid of this exploitation and removing people from their depressed stage to a higher stage, we come across the political problem, and the political problem becomes a common factor for all of us who inhabit this country. Therefore it becomes necessary for all of us to do our utmost and take our part in the struggle for freedom and independence of this country, because so long as that barrier is not removed, I do not think it is possible for us to remove other barriers that keep down women or other depressed groups in the country. I do not mean that we should wait and do nothing at all in regard to the other matters which affect women till India has got political freedom. We have to march together, more or less, on all fronts. But inevitably we cannot go far in any direction till we remove that major barrier of political subjection. Therefore it becomes necessary for the women of India to take their full part in the struggle for political freedom. And apart from that, if they take full part in that—as in a large measure they have done in the past few years—they will reach a stage inevitably in the country, which would make it terribly difficult for their menfolk to be obstructive as before. They would gain a position in the public life of the country from which it would not be possible to remove them.

I do not know very much about the state of affairs during the civil disobedience movement in this province here. But in northern India, where the *purdah* system has prevailed and many other evil customs

of seclusion, the 1930 civil disobedience movement played an extraordinary and astounding part in putting an end to that system of seclusion of women. They came out from their houses when their menfolk were in prison; they took the lead in the great movement; they played their part; they showed quite extraordinary powers of organisation, discipline and enterprise. That kind of thing sent up our womenfolk in the estimation of not only our country at large, but of other people in other parts of the world who had been in the habit of saying that Indian women were slaves and incapable of doing anything. They were surprised and astounded at the change that they saw.

So therefore women should take the fullest part in the political struggle for freedom, political and economic. But remember that politics and economics are after all a means to an end. Even political independence, important as it is, is only a means to a certain end. What are the fundamental questions that people have to face all over the world? These could be resolved into the relation of man to man, man to woman and man to society. Probably all things will come under these heads, and when we consider these wider and larger questions, the political side is not quite so important as it might otherwise appear to be. We in India inevitably are somewhat overwhelmed by the political aspect of the matter, because that happens to be a tremendous barrier in our way. And so long as that barrier is not removed, we can think of little else; yet, so far as women are concerned you cannot think entirely on this political plane. You have to think also on your own plane and think of your own disabilities, because you are not likely to be helped by your menfolk. Therefore whilst you will have to share with men in the struggle for political freedom, you will have to bear the whole burden of the struggle for women's emancipation yourself. And the sooner you realise that the better will it be for you. Individuals may sympathise with you; individuals may also help you. But still you will have to fight, not so much perhaps actual opposition, although of that there will be enough, but tremendous inertia which is far more dangerous to combat. You will have, if you want to combat it, to go on with all your strength all the time, because the moment you sit down, the inertia overwhelms you and puts an end to your work. I am glad I see evidence of this activity to some extent, though not enough. Women's movements are rising up, trying for the removal of various disabilities and seeking representation of women in all political bodies. It is essential that women should have a voice because they will not only be helpful but also reasonable, sensible and peaceful. There is one danger against which I would like to warn you and that is this: that in your desire to fight against the disabilities, you might forget

the political struggle. Today the principal urge in India is the nationalist urge for political freedom and for economic freedom. Both these are common for men and women and if you try to function outside these two urges and cut yourself adrift from the living current of national life, your movement will be functioning in the air, and you will be functioning in little coteries and drawing-room parties.

Your president has referred to the part that women should take in the various bodies and committees, political and other, in the country. I entirely agree with her. As I have already said, apart from the necessity of women having to consider the major issues, it is quite absurd that that alone should be the work. So far as the Congress is concerned I should very much like, I would welcome, more and more women occupying prominent positions in committees and boards and its executives. So far as the Congress constitution is concerned, it not only welcomes but encourages women to come in. There are not very many women at the present moment occupying seats of authority in the Congress Party; that may be due, unfortunately, to the fact that men do not like pushing women ahead and you have to face that also. If the women ask and are really keen about it and push ahead, you are bound to get it because there is a strong body of public opinion behind you. Men also would welcome this. I hope that your push will have such strength that it will become very difficult for men to refuse your demands. I thank you once again for your welcome.

5. On Industrial Training¹

I am glad of the opportunity to visit this institution. I was interested in the young men working here and I wanted to find from their faces and from their eyes if they looked worthwhile. So far as I am personally concerned, I find it extraordinarily difficult to think of people as Harijans or non-Harijans, or anything else. I want to see something in the eyes and the face, some signs of intelligence, spirit, character and courage. When I saw the children here I liked their faces; I found that they had some energy in them. They were the kind of

1. Speech at Kodambakkam Industrial School, Madras, 6 October 1936. From *The Hindu*, 6 October 1936.

people who would probably, one cannot say for certain, make their way in future. Then I wondered if this was in any way due to the kind of life and training they got here. Presumably, it is partly due to the kind of training they get here; they get a measure of self-reliance, they feel that they are learning something valuable to rely upon so that they can make their way through life and the world with their own strength and that gives them self-confidence and self-reliance. Therefore, I liked the spirited faces of the young boys that I saw and that is the chief impression that I shall carry away with me. Because of these young boys that I saw here, I think this institution has justified itself. You will see that the way I approach the question is somewhat different from perhaps the usual approach. I look at it, as I try to look at various other problems, political or otherwise, from bottom upwards and I shall therefore wish this institution of yours every success.

Such institutions, desirable as they are, seem to be drops in the vast ocean. We can take credit for the fact that this institution is catering for and training 27 boys. But it is more to the point that we should take discredit for the fact that there are so many hundred thousands we are not catering for. What about them? We seem to be tremendously smug because we take a bucketful of water from the ocean and think we have drained the ocean. Therefore whilst it is right and proper that we should foster these institutions and work for them, we cannot forget that the real problem of raising these vast numbers, untrained, uneducated young boys and girls, Harijans or others, is a problem which is not going to be tackled in a small and petty way. It will require bigger measures. Do not think that I am minimising the importance of such institutions because I think they are very important, not only from the smaller point of view of training some small number of young men but even I say, from the larger point of view of laying some kind of a foundation for our tackling in future the whole problem on a big scale. Such institutions produce the human material which will help us to solve the problem. The real big problem ultimately is the problem which I do not think anybody can take up or solve except the state. We must have the resources of the state as also popular cooperation before we can solve this big problem.

I dislike talking about particular groups or communities because I find it a little difficult in thinking of them as such and it is our duty of course to raise the so-called Harijans because they are very backward, so low down in the social scale. But I hope you will raise them so that they might cease to be a separate group and that will only happen when I think we have tackled the whole question of society as a whole. The problem of the tremendous number of unemployed

in the country, the tremendous number of illiterates not having the wherewithal to live in the country—that is the real problem of which the Harijans form a considerable part. Therefore, if you tackle the big problem, the Harijan problem solves itself. That does not mean we should forget the Harijans. You cannot simply go about and take an odd person here and there and try to pull him above the mire. You have to remove the mud all round. I wish to thank you for the address and for the kind words in which it is couched.

6. On the Harijan Problem¹

I am visiting various Harijan institutions and quarters in the city so that I may get some idea of the condition of Harijans round about Madras. I think of this problem not as a Harijan problem, but as the problem of the poor, downtrodden, unemployed, landless labourers in India. We ought to know that at present the biggest problems in India are the problem of Indian poverty—poverty of the Indian masses—and the problem of Indian unemployment, unemployment not only of the masses, but also of the middle classes. The Harijan problem is really a part of these problems. Therefore, if we try to solve these problems, we can solve the Harijan question also.

I do not understand nor do I appreciate the idea of groups of people being kept apart. We must remove all these barriers so that there may be no group in India which by its work, economic position or name, is supposed to belong to an inferior group. Therefore, the problem before us is not a limited problem of uplifting this man or that man, but of establishing in India equality so that every single person in India, man or woman, may have the fullest opportunity for growth.

Now that, as I take it, is the general outlook of the Indian National Congress and it is in order to give effect to that, that it seeks, in the first instance, political freedom and political power in this country; for only when the people of this country have political power can they adopt economic and social policies which can raise the masses up to a

1. Madras, 6 October 1936. From *The Hindu*, 6 October 1936.

human level. It is absurd to talk of uplifting our masses, or educating them in any big sense, so long as we do not change the whole structure of the state as it exists today. The existing structure is not meant for raising the masses. In fact it has resulted in the deterioration of the millions in India. Therefore it becomes necessary to change the structure.

You may say that a school may be opened to educate you or that industrial homes should be started for you to get some kind of technical training. But only a few here and a few there will benefit out of the hundreds and thousands of people who require such education. This is not the way to uplift the millions that form the nation. In this way, we may take a thousand years before we complete our job. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to the very foundations, so that we can build a structure for the entire nation. We cannot put up a big building without a secure foundation. Therefore in aspiring for political freedom and in seeking a just economic order, we ought to lay a firm foundation on which we can build up the well-being of Indian humanity. This kind of thing cannot be done easily by individual effort. This can be done by great organisations which have power and vast numbers of people behind them. That is why we are seeing the Congress, which is the only really great national organisation in the country, doing big things in this country; we are seeing it influencing tremendously the present state structure in India. Why? Because it derives its strength from the millions. And if we have got to do big things we can only do them in an organised way through powerful organisations, and the only organisation that exists in India for this purpose is the Indian National Congress. Therefore, whether Harijans or Hindus, Muslims or Christians, if we think in terms of raising the Indian masses, if we think in terms of political or economic or social freedom, it is necessary for us to support the National Congress and strengthen it. We must support it and put all our strength into it and if we like, we may try to influence it in the way we think best. But we cannot support the cause by sulking in a corner; we should join the main army of progress in the country and help it with all the strength we may have.

It is about time people stopped touching another's feet. This seems to me to be a sign of slavery. If we want to be free men, we ought to act like free men and not touch another's feet or be bending all the time. We must have a straight back. In a meeting we must behave in an organised and disciplined manner, and we should not shout or push.

7. Speech at Gokulam Ashramam¹

In your address you have stated that I am a "friend of the poor". I wholly disagree with you. I am an enemy of the poor. I dislike poverty intensely. I hate it. I want you to root it out and put an end to it. I am friendly with people who happen to be poor. That is a different matter. I want them not to be poor. I think it is possible for us to put an end to poverty. Therefore I do not want you to think in terms of poverty continuing in this country or anywhere else. You have stated that you are doing a little bit to ease the suffering of the poor. Until the problem is finally solved, one will only be able to do a little bit. You know very well that by giving odd charities to a few beggars we cannot solve the problem. Charity in money or in service does not necessarily solve the problem as a whole, although it does create an atmosphere for its solution.

I do not know much about the Gokulam Ashramam. But from what little I have heard about it, I feel that it is a little different from the usual run of institutions intended for doing good to those who are called the lower classes. It may be that these can do a little good occasionally, but if I belonged to those classes, lower down in the social scale, I would probably have resented very strongly the patronising attitude of those who came to do good. It is not the right line of approach to the solution of the problem. It seems to me that they are meant far more to display a patronising spirit than a spirit of camaraderie of goodwill and cooperation. I am glad to note that in the conduct of the Gokulam Ashramam there is no such spirit of condescension or patronage but a spirit of mutual cooperation, and that the idea of service governs here. This is the right and effective way of approaching the problem and I am glad to find that such work is being done in the colony. The idea will certainly spread and I hope that the young men and women who are going into the villages from this Ashramam will be able to get into touch with the people and spread the ideals of service.

I wish the Ashramam and the inmates every success.

1. Madras, 6 October 1936. From *The Hindu*, 6 October 1936. In the Ashramam 18 Harijan boys and girls were receiving training to serve the destitute in the villages.

8. Two Messages¹

After many years I have come back to this great city of the south, and ever since my arrival I have been imbibing impressions of your province. The vast multitude that greeted me at the station and along the route, and this enormous gathering that faces me as I speak make me feel very humble, though humility is not much in my line. I know that these enormous gatherings and welcomes represent something which is not exactly meant for me as an individual but something else, though it may be that in such matters personality also counts for a little.

I come to you as the bearer of the message of the Congress. I come to you with the dignity and authority of the Indian National Congress. I say so not from a sense of vanity but because I do feel full of authority because I am the President of the Indian National Congress. I feel full of authority when I speak to you in the name of the Congress because I know that in speaking so, I speak what is in your minds and hearts and I really echo your own voices.

It is right that you should welcome that message because it is not a message from outside yourselves or a commandment from another, but it is the voice of your hearts and minds. It is right that you should welcome the President of the Indian National Congress and show your allegiance to that great national organisation in ways of enthusiasm and sometimes of frenzy. What does that mean? It does mean, I take it, ultimately that the Congress, in spite of what people or groups here and there say and shout occasionally, is something which does mirror the mind and heart of India, which in spite of many failings, in spite, may be, of its containing many persons who may not be wholly desirable—it is a great organisation and it contains good, bad and indifferent persons as all great organisations do—I say in spite of its failings and weaknesses, the Indian National Congress is a great and mighty organisation representing the people of India, representing their desires, and their sufferings, and therefore, claiming the allegiance, love and affection of India. Why is it so? Because it represents ultimately something deeper than those superficial things over which we occasionally quarrel, dispute and get excited. In the measure you have understood that deeper thing, that deeper call which the Congress represents, in that measure you will have understood the Indian question.

1. Speech at public meeting in Madras, 6 October 1936. From *The Hindu* 7 October 1936.

Most of us forget this deeper message. Most of us, I am afraid, are little-minded and short-sighted enough to get excited over the little things of life and forget the bigger and deeper things—the bigger issues—and then speak, in our short-sightedness, sometimes with ill will in our minds. We attack the Congress and attack its decisions. But we forget that, after all, if there is anything in India which carries the promise of hope to us, it is the Indian National Congress. Think of it, I beg of you. Let those who may be detractors of the Congress think of it. What would Indians have been in the last generation or so without the Indian National Congress? Think of what India would be today if we had not this powerful all-India organisation containing all kinds of people, right from the north, from the country wherefrom I hail originally, from Kashmir and the Himalayan snows, to Kanyakumari in the south, binding them together in a common cause, a common struggle and a common love. Think where we would be without the Indian National Congress, with our petty quarrels, provincial jealousies and our mutual conflicts and struggles. We would have been all crushed under the iron heel of British imperialism.

Therefore when you think of the Congress, it is up to you to think of it as yourselves; because it is your body, your strength, your organisation. How was it that this nation which has been under foreign domination for ages and generations, and which had lost even the hope of freedom, suddenly stood up, and faced the powerful country, the powerful empire, which dominates the world and dictated terms to other empires? How was it that we stood up, faced it bravely, and to some extent, shook its foundations? How was it that we had the strength to do all these? Where did we get the strength from? Not from outside, you know. We did not get it from great leaders, although leadership was very essential and great leadership came to us at the right moment to show us the path we had to tread. That strength came ultimately from the millions of the Indian people. It came from you and the likes of you all over the country, peasants, workers, middle classes and others. It came from all these joining hands, working together, cooperating together, fighting and suffering together. We developed thus a great strength which terrified even a great empire. We are going to develop that strength still more till we humble that great empire.

So let us have a proper perspective of the Indian National Congress when we talk about it or discuss it and when groups of people and parties talk about it and venture to criticise it and tell others and write about it in terms of detraction. It seems a curious thing not only in your province but in other provinces too that we find individuals and

groups who have spent their time and energies in cooperating with the British Empire, which dominates and exploits our country, and in fighting those who have been struggling for freedom, and accepting office under this government and cooperating with it in crushing Indian nationalism and the freedom struggle. It is extraordinary and astounding that these individuals and groups should dare to come out in the open and dare to talk in terms of detraction of the Congress and what it stands for and ask what has the Congress done for India. What have they done for India, I should like to know. It is about time that we told them frankly what we mean. Let us not use hard words. But it is time that they were made to feel by you and others and all of us that we will put up with much, but we will not put up with this kind of siding with British imperialism at every crisis in this country, and with those who try to crush the forces of nationalism, but go out into the country posing as great nationalists, patriots and workers for Indian freedom.

Therefore I come to you with the message of the Indian National Congress. I do not beg of you to accept it. Why should I beg of you to accept it? Why should I come in humility to you to accept this message? I can and do remind you of it. We forget sometimes the voice of our own hearts and the claims of reason because little things happen which make us forget them. We stray away into by-paths from the main road and we find it difficult to emerge out of them. We need to be reminded of the message again and again so that we may not lose heart. I have not come to tell you any new thing. I have come to tell you of the old thing, repeat it again and again so that you may remember it and act whenever the time comes. But in addition to the message of the Congress, I bring to you and to the people of this province another message, a message which has not been adopted by the Indian National Congress, but towards which the Congress has looked with a certain amount of acceptance. I would like to make it clear on this platform and elsewhere that the message is not that of the Congress. I do not wish to dilate upon the subject, but only wish to draw your attention to certain facts connected with it.

During the last three or four months I have travelled a good bit, chiefly in the north of India, somewhat in the west of India and at the present moment in the south of India. During these months I addressed vast gatherings. I took part in innumerable processions containing vast multitudes of people. I have looked into the eyes of millions of my countrymen and women. I have looked deep into their eyes to find out what lay behind them. I have tried to interpret the message that lay in the minds and hearts of the millions. I have found, wherever I have gone, whenever I said anything about the new message,

the message of social freedom, this message of abolition of poverty through a new organisation of society, through socialism, whenever I said that, I have seen a shining light in the eyes of the millions, I have felt the enthusiasm of the millions, I have felt a fire at work in these millions. I want you to understand why that is so.

Wherever I went I addressed vast audiences. At this moment also I am facing a vast audience. But I would like to tell you that this is not the biggest audience I have addressed during the last three or four months. Sometimes it looked as if a whole city was on the move. In parts of my own province and in the Punjab—and the Punjab is supposed to be a backward province politically, a communal-ridden province—I saw and felt as if almost the whole population of a huge district was on the move. It was astounding to see such crowds at unauthorised meetings. Where the authorised meetings took place, the gatherings were still bigger. It was undoubtedly so because of the great prestige and power of the Indian National Congress. They came to hear the message of the Congress. It was also, if I may suggest it, because they had heard whispers and murmurings of the new message of socialism. It had awakened them and made them walk scores of miles to know what it was about. Peasants in the zamindaris and talukdaris came in their thousands to hear the new message. It was impossible even with the help of loudspeakers to get at the audience. Therefore I want you fully to understand, if not to accept, this message, and try to realise how the new thought-currents are moving millions of people.

I would like to ask you why the message of national and political freedom of the Indian National Congress moves the Indian people so much. It is good to have a pride which desires freedom. But it is something more than that which moves the millions. It is something more which urges them forward. Some of you, prosperous people, may have pride. But what pride is there in the hungry, exploited people, exploited by all the means of vested interests combined with British imperialism?

There is a stronger force, the force of hunger which guides them forward. They consider that by this new message their hunger will be satisfied, their sufferings will be removed. Great movements like noncooperation, civil disobedience and satyagraha have prospered in our country and prospered to an astounding degree. This is because we have behind us the tremendous urge of economics, the urge of hunger, suffering and misery. So long as these urges remain, and not only remain but also grow, we will drive forward the masses into action. All that we see happening in India and in the world at the moment is the result of the enormous forces of high motion.

You in the city and in the provinces of Andhra and Tamil Nadu are thinking for the moment a tremendous deal in terms of elections, all-India elections, provincial elections, municipal elections and the like. I see a frightful excitement about the municipal elections in the city. So far as the election question is concerned, I may say a few words about it if I remember about it in time. It is not that I do not attach importance to it. I attach importance to everything that the Congress takes up and whatever we take up we propose to do well. We are not dabblers in odd things. We are not Sunday politicians. We are not vaguely interested in these matters. After all, these matters, for many of us, mean a great deal. In the past these have been matters of life and death. It may be so in the future. We cannot take them lightly. Therefore whatever we take up, we take up in earnest and put our whole strength behind it. If you like, forget it the next day. So far as this election matter is concerned, the Congress is going to do it well. So far as I am concerned, in regard to this election matter, I propose to put forth all the strength in me to see that the Indian National Congress does it well. Having said so, I will tell you it is likely that I may forget it the next day. Why do I say so? Because my mind is full of the vast problems that face the world today, that face India today. My mind is full of the future, and always I am trying to peep into that future, to have some glimpse of that future, so that I may be able to mould my policy in accordance with that future, so that I may help the Indian National Congress and the country in preparing for that future. About that future you and I may not be able to say much. We are not prophets. History tells us it is difficult to prophesy. One thing I can say with confidence and that is this. The future is not going to be a static future. It is going to be a dynamic future for India and the world. It is going to be a revolutionary future, a continually changing future. It is going to be a future which might see many horrible things. I don't know what the result of these big revolutionary changes might be. I am not usually afraid of dynamic changes. But sometimes my mind wobbles a little when I see the revolutionary future of the world. This future may contain in it seeds of destruction of a great deal of what we call civilisation in this world today. Howsoever it might be, it is a future you cannot ignore. It is a future which will bring in its train numerous human earthquakes and you cannot escape terrestrial or human earthquakes simply by disliking them. If an earthquake comes in the city of Madras, even those who dislike it may find it not comfortable; and if a human earthquake comes to this province you may not be able to escape it, however much you may dislike it. All over you can see these human earthquakes taking

place. You can almost feel the rumblings in the air and the tremblings under your feet. By understanding it you are prepared for it.

We might have to face in India and in the world all kinds of chaotic things. If I believe in revolution, I believe in disciplined revolution. If we are thinking human beings, we have to think of the enormous possibilities that the future hides, but which may not be hidden too long. And we have to be prepared for them. Therefore my mind is thinking of the future. Sometimes it is thinking of the past also and trying to draw lessons from the past. So a curious thing happens. I will make a confession to you, though it is not a thing which will enhance my reputation as a politician in your eyes. Sometimes I think of the past and often I think of the near future or the distant future, so that the present seems to be unreal to me. That is a horrible feeling in a politician. Now I do not ask you to lose grasp of the present or to lose yourself in dreaming about the future. But I do ask you to think about these big problems.

We read in the papers about the happenings in Spain, Germany and other places, about fascism and anti-fascism and imperialism and anti-imperialism. Are they isolated things or parts of a connected whole? For my part, I consider that if we look deeply into them, we would find them to be a kaleidoscopic picture. Parts of it may show us what is happening in China as between Japanese imperialism and China split up into various parts. In Spain, there is a civil war and a democratic regime is being crushed by a cruel fascist military autocracy. The greatest tragedy in the world is happening in Spain today. I desire that you should understand me, as I desire to understand you. We must understand each other. I have not come to listen to long speeches of praise from you and you should also not expect much praise from me. Not that praise is not due to each other. But after all it is not a useful pastime to sit together and recount each other's praises. Therefore I want to tell you that the thing that occupies my mind at the moment more than anything else is the Spanish civil war. The war is having a tremendous effect on the future of Europe. The fight is between the progressive and the reactionary forces in Europe. If the rebels win, it means fascist domination of Europe and the world, though not always, at least for the moment. Fascism may sometimes come into conflict with imperialism; but both are birds of the same feather. They hang together ultimately. Therefore, if fascism goes up in the world, imperialism, including British imperialism, goes up and *vice versa*. Therefore we can see these forces acting and reacting in all parts of the world. In Spain the government is a democratic government, not a communist government, although socialists and communists support it.

This is being attacked by a military reactionary clique. It is attacked in the first instance by foreign soldiers. The cry of religion being in danger is raised, but curiously the men who fought for Roman Catholicism in Spain in the first instance were paid Moors from Africa. We thus see the name of religion being exploited to crush the democratic republic of Spain. We find in India also the cry of religion being in danger, the family system in danger, etc., raised whenever an economic plan of regeneration of society is discussed.

Therefore you see all over the world today this tremendous fight between the powers of progress and reaction, as well as a growing socialism. Go to the little country of Palestine. What is happening there? You may think it to be a conflict between the Arabs and the Jews. No, it is a fight between British imperialism and Arab nationalism. Go to any country under foreign domination. You will see the same conflict between imperialism and nationalism. You will find everywhere a growing socialism. Under foreign domination the problem of unemployment becomes so important that inevitably people begin to think in terms of socialism and communism.

What will be the result of fascist victory in Spain? We can see it from the manner in which Hitler speaks and the shameless way in which the German Government supports the rebels. The result will be the inevitable product of fascism, war—war on a big international scale. It means war all over the world. It means a dreadful war which may destroy half the world. We should think over the consequences and be prepared for them. Many things may happen. A war may upset the economic order of society. We will have to face an economic crisis everywhere.

How to face the chaotic conditions which may come to India during such a revolutionary period? It can be faced ultimately only by a strongly-knit disciplined organisation. What organisation is there except the Indian National Congress? There is no way out except to strengthen the Indian National Congress. If it is necessary today it is even more so when the time of trial comes. We must have an organised and disciplined nation behind us, so that when chaotic conditions arise we can immediately take the matter in hand and control those conditions.

There are elections now and further elections may come. I am not sure if the federal structure will ever come. So far as the Congress is concerned it will do everything to wreck and destroy it. We have now decided to stand for elections to the provincial assemblies. What we will do afterwards, we will tell afterwards. The forcing of this Act on India in spite of the united disapproval of India means one thing only.

It is an invitation to India to revolt. And if we do not revolt today, it is because we are not strong enough to do so.

We must know our weaknesses. It is no use shouting slogans, though shouting a slogan does sometimes strengthen a multitude. We must know where our strength lies and where our weakness lies. We must never forget our weaknesses, and never forget the strength of our opponents. Therefore if we adopt a certain policy today, don't forget that the fundamental principle is to wreck the whole structure of this Act, absolutely, completely, not only this Act, but everything before, behind and right and left of it. If there is any doubt in the mind of any person as to what the Indian National Congress stands for in regard to this Act, surely after reading the manifesto issued some time back from Bombay all doubts should be removed.

I urge you to read the Congress election manifesto more than once and to understand its inner significance. That document, people with little minds, people who are ignorant of world politics and its import, will not understand correctly. They may not know its significance. I do not say it is a perfect document. I welcome criticism of that manifesto and I have no grievance about it. The Congress welcomes criticisms, because it will know the feeling in the country. It is only then we will know our strength. We want to develop our strength. It is worthwhile for the Congress to receive criticisms. But these must be informed criticisms. As I said, it is not a perfect document. But those who read and understand it will know the national mind and the national struggle the Congress tries to carry on. The Congress is interested in the elections only because these will help us to carry on the national struggle.

You all know the controversy on the important issue of office acceptance. On this question there are differences of opinion not only in Madras, but in other places as well. The majority may perhaps hold a contrary view to the one I hold. This question, as you know, came up before the Lucknow Congress and I ventured to place before it my view with all the strength and force that I could command. The Congress, I take it, would have decided the issue one way or the other, perhaps in favour of it, but it decided finally in favour of postponing the question. Let me also confess that it might have decided against my view. But this question, let us remember, remains undecided. I have not changed my view. I consider it will be fatal for the Congress and Congressmen to accept office and I hold it will lead to cooperation with British imperialism, giving a moral support to imperialism, taking responsibility for the misdeeds of imperialism. It will also tone down our struggle against imperialism. Therefore, whenever an occasion comes,

I shall say once again what I feel about it. What we are concerned with is how to fight and end this new Act. Remember the new federal structure has got to be fought tooth and nail. It is difficult to find suitable language to characterise this. It is disgusting, poisonous and offensive. It is a thing which has to be stoutly opposed. It is an attempt to impose feudalism and feudal autocracy. That is a most undesirable thing. Such a position is not to be tolerated even at the cost of revolution, if it is necessary.

I shall now proceed to say a few words on a much narrower issue, viz, elections to the corporation and to the local bodies in this presidency. I find from newspapers and from the numerous letters and telegrams that I receive and from all kinds of people who come to see me to discuss this question, that there is an undesirable type of interest evinced in these municipal elections. Since the Congress has decided to contest these elections I say it is right and proper that we should contest them in right earnest. If the Congress takes up this work, it must be done well. I however find extraordinary mud-slinging against one another, mutual criticism of an undesirable type and personal matters introduced and coming to the front. You know that this has been our misfortune to some extent in Tamil Nadu and Andhra. You know we have condemned certain of our friends whom we respect and with whom we have cooperated for a long time and with whom we hope we will co-operate in future. But judging the question from various standpoints and from the point of view of the larger question of the fight for freedom, the Working Committee of the Congress had to condemn the action of those friends. In these local squabbles, we are apt to forget the main issue. Therefore the Working Committee, in order to check the certain amount of growing indiscipline in the Congress ranks, took action in the matter. It was not right for Congressmen to forget the pledge they took when standing for elections. If Congressmen forget this pledge and act independently, what pledge are they going to keep in the bigger fight for freedom? This growing sense of indiscipline is a serious matter. Why are the people looking to the Congress to lead in the fight? In a big organisation, self-seekers there may be. It is natural. It shows the measure of the strength of the Congress. There is no need to worry about it too much. Such men will soon be found out. But let us not do anything which will weaken the strength of the Congress. The people believe that the Congress will not bow its knee to British imperialism. That hope in the Congress must be encouraged and we must live up to that hope. We shall rather see these elections lost than allow the Congress to buy success at the cost of its ideals. The Congress will not buy success. The Congress ideals should

not be allowed to be lowered. Let Congress committees and Congressmen remember this. People come and tell me about the corporation elections and the individual candidates. I am not interested in individual candidates and I forget the next moment who they are. But I am interested in seeing that the strength of this national organisation is developed.

So long as the Congress is a big national organisation, whose strength we want to develop, we must bear in mind not the claims of individual Congressmen, but bear in mind that the Congress is bigger than its secretary and president. Let us remember this distinction. If you dislike Congress committees, its presidents or secretaries, try to reform the committees. I can say, as President of the Congress I receive complaints which are often justifiable. There are people in the committees who create vested interests in Congress offices. But let us remember that the Congress is something bigger than its leaders, bigger than Mahatma Gandhi. The point to be remembered is that it is our duty to enforce discipline in the Congress ranks, because we are a democratic institution and indiscipline in it will spell ruin. Even if a one-eyed man or one-legged man is put up by the Congress, we must support him. We must try to set right things not by opposing the Congress and by bringing charges against the secretaries and presidents of the committees and by telling that this man or that man should not be put up for the corporation elections. If this is done, I will not tolerate it. You can get rid of your grievances through the organisation by joining it and working through it. These are elementary things in working a democratic organisation. Take an interest, a living interest in Congress activities and try to remedy things from within. I do not want a fascist regime in the Congress ranks. Those who think that the Congress is not carrying out its policy properly, should try to convert the Congress to their view and then try to control its policy. I do not want futile accusations made against Congressmen by Congressmen. Let them remember the ideals for which the Congress is standing and working. It is nationalism *versus* imperialism. Even in matters of common interest, for example, the question of civil liberties, some who do not like Congressmen, are refusing their cooperation. When such are the conditions, let us not weaken the strength of the Congress organisation by mutual squabbles.

I have heard only distantly about the Justice Party. I do not know whether that party exists today. Perhaps its existence is now threatened and therefore this group is shouting much. It is an astonishing fact that this group in the past had stood as the staunchest pillar of British imperialist administration and flourished under the shadow of British

imperialism. If that group exists, we must remove it and annihilate it. I say this because the Congress stands to win freedom and those groups which support imperialism must be removed. These reactionary forces ought to be checked. The main problems of India are hunger, poverty and unemployment. If you think in terms of these problems and find out ways and means to remove these evils, you will see that there is no other body except the Congress worthy of support. All these problems affect alike the Hindu, the Muslim, the Brahmin and the non-Brahmin. These communal groups are singularly unable to find out a solution for these questions. Another thing I wish to state is that the communal leaders are always political reactionaries. How can the Congress have any truck with these reactionaries? The Congress alone can solve the three main problems. The way to tackle these problems is to think about them in the light of what I have said. The question of socialism can be decided after we have obtained freedom, for I feel that socialism will come after we have obtained freedom. But if you study these questions, it will help you in your national struggle and that is why I have referred to them at some length. I thank you very much for the patience with which you have heard me.

9. Labour and Socialism¹

I am sorry I cannot speak to you in a language which all of you can understand, for it is difficult to convey one's thoughts when one's speech has to be translated sentence by sentence. But I wish you to remember that although we may talk different languages, the problems we have to face are identical, whether we live in the south or whether we live in the north. I wish to consider with you the nature of some of these big problems that face us all over the country; how they affect the industrial workers, railway workers; how they affect the peasantry; how they affect the middle classes in their cities. For essentially these problems are fundamentally allied to one another and if we seek a solution of them, we will have to go right down and understand why these problems arise.

1. Address to railway workers, Perambur, Madras, 6 October 1936. From *The Hindu*, 7 October 1936.

The biggest problems in India today are the problems of poverty and unemployment. Those who are railway workers have had to face for some time past the question of retrenchment. Why should there be factories closing down? Why should there be enormous numbers of unemployed? These are complex questions and we cannot solve them unless we understand why they have arisen. In your address to me, you have stated that you stand for socialism. Labour the world over, wherever it is, stands for socialism; and even apart from labour, there are many other forces which stand for socialism in the world today.

I believe and many of us believe that the present troubles and distempers of the world cannot be cured except by socialism. Therefore I hope that socialism will come to this country as well as to the rest of the world. But I find often enough that when we talk about socialism we talk about a thing which we seldom understand. Our socialism means simply, perhaps, a dislike of people who are better off. That is not socialism. Socialism is an economic doctrine whereby there would be a proper distribution of the things that you produce, thereby raising the standards of the people all round. I am not going into what socialism is, because it is a complicated subject. But what I wish to tell you is this. We have got big and complicated problems to deal with. We cannot get rid of them by simply learning a slogan. It is right, I think, that you should take the trouble to understand what socialism is so that when the time comes we may be able to work along the right lines to achieve it.

We talk a great deal of socialism and we should talk a great deal about it; but it is obvious that in order to have socialism in this country, we must have political power in our hands. We cannot have socialism under the British Government. This is an absurdity. Therefore it is essential for us to have freedom and independence in this country before we can give effect to any socialistic principle. Therefore we must not, in talking vaguely of socialism, forget the struggle for independence in this country. I say so because I find many people taking refuge in talking about socialism and doing nothing in regard to the political struggle for freedom. For a socialist in India, today the first and primary duty is to fight for the independence of the country. If he does not do so, he cannot be a socialist however much he may talk about socialism. But it is also true that a socialist fighting for political independence does it in a way so as to keep the socialist issue in the foreground, so that when freedom comes it may be easier for socialism to come.

We have come to the conclusion that for the workers and for all of us in this country it is essential to fight for independence. For the

workers especially it is necessary to keep the socialist ideal in their mind and to work for it. We have thus two definite things to work for and to fight for, and the first in order of precedence is independence.

The Indian National Congress is our great national organisation fighting for independence. It has fought in the past and it is going to fight, and it is bound to fight, in the future for independence. There are many odd groups and odd individuals all over the country, who make a noise from time to time. But it is patent to anybody who has eyes to see that the only effective organisation which has the strength to fight and the courage to fight for freedom is the Indian National Congress. If any of you want to do anything effective in this fight it is up to you to strengthen the National Congress in this fight. Therefore if you, as the organised workers of the country, want to take your part in this fight for Indian independence, it is necessary for you to join in this political struggle of the Indian National Congress. I am glad to find that more and more organised workers of the country have begun to realise this fact and to give their weight and support to this national struggle carried on by the Congress. The more they make it a mass struggle the more it will be for the good of the masses. Now it is good that you should influence the Congress in this direction and cooperate with the Congress in the fight for freedom. At the same time it is right and necessary that you should keep your workers' organisations functioning and growing so that you may be able to fight for the special workers' demands with which you are most concerned and not only fight for them now, but much more so to press for them in a larger way when there is any measure of political freedom in this country. The strength of the workers obviously lies in their organisations. They have no individual strength. The strength of the organised workers lies in their trade unions and in cooperation among the various trade unions themselves.

During the past few years the Indian workers' movement has suffered a tremendous setback by breaking up into various parts. You know also that efforts have been made to bring about unity in the labour ranks. But unfortunately these efforts have not succeeded to any large extent. I am surprised that in spite of the obvious lesson that we ought to have learnt from the past experiences, there are still people in the ranks of the labour movement who do not encourage unity in the labour ranks, who actually encourage disunity, and who make all sorts of futile excuses and bring about obstruction in the way of such unity.

I want to put it to you, the rank and file of the labour movement, and of the railway workers' movement, that it is up to you to consider these problems and to press for this unity for without it, take it from

me, you and your comrades will not be able to get much out of your pleadings and beggings, but might even lose what little you possess.

I am sure that if the labour rank and file insist on unity in the labour movement, if they make it clear to their leaders that they must have this unity, those leaders who come in the way of that unity will have to bow to that decision. But so long as they do not insist on this, it may be that some of their leaders here and there will come in the way, will not work for unity and the workers will remain weak and disunited.

The workers have got to work then for this unity in the labour movement. They have got to build up a strong workers' movement in this country, both to help in the struggle for freedom and to help in the economic struggle of the workers and ultimately in the struggle for socialism. They cannot do it by fighting amongst themselves and being disunited.

The first lesson a worker learns is the importance of united effort. The whole trade union movement means workers working together. In the same way, on the political side, they have to pull together. But in order to weaken them, all manner of forces come into play, largely at the instance of those who do not want independence—the government or other forces—and the result is that splits are created, sometimes on a religious basis. Whether they are Muslims or Hindus, are not their demands as workers the same? There is no difference whether they are Hindus, Muslims, railway workers or factory workers. If the cause of the workers goes up, both profit; if it goes down, both will sink under it.

Unfortunately we are not free. Many of us are foolish enough not to see this and we think more in terms of our community, though it will not make the slightest difference to anybody if a few more Hindus or Muslims get government jobs or seats in the councils. Therefore I want you to consider all these questions, to build up your movement, to join hands with the Indian National Congress which is fighting for political liberty, and at the same time stand for the workers' rights and advance your cause, and having built a free India, later go and build a socialist India.

10. The Congress in Perspective¹

Young men and women,

I do not feel exactly like a man of destiny. I do feel now and always, when I have to stand and speak before an audience of young men and women, somewhat more youthful. I feel a little more optimistic, and generally I feel better than I usually do. But, in spite of that, I am afraid, I stand before you not to give any dynamic, eloquent or rhetorical message, because a person who is made to speak several times in the course of the day to various audiences, varying in character, is apt to lose the inspiration he might otherwise possess. Therefore, standing before you, I frankly confess to you that I have not a very full or prepared mind, and I propose to go on in a scrappy manner, as odd ideas come to my mind. You will therefore forgive me if I am not very cogent or very inspiring.

Yesterday I spoke to a vast multitude of human beings—and other addresses too I have delivered in Madras—about the current political and economic problems. Those problems are with us, whether we are students or grown-ups. You have to face them. But at the same time I should like you to consider them in a slightly different way from the way of the grown-ups. I should like to address you in a slightly different way from the way in which I address a politically or physically grown-up audience. Often enough, those who are physically grown-up are not all mentally grown-up. But that is not the case in India only. You find it elsewhere too. So I should like you to consider these problems in a somewhat detached way. Whether we criticise the youth of India or praise them, ultimately the burden of carrying on India is bound to fall on your shoulders and the like of you in the country. It is going to be a heavy burden, a heavy responsibility, and if you do not realise what it is going to be, if you do not prepare for it from now, it will not be well with the country. Therefore it is right that you young men and women, all over the country, should think about these matters, not necessarily come to a decision immediately, but clear your minds of the enormous amount of cobwebs they do possess. I do like addressing students and drawing their attention to these various matters and perhaps make them think a little. I do not want you to accept anything I say. I do not possess, I hope, a fascist mentality. I am not a Fuhrer or any other kind of a man of destiny.

1. Address to Madras students, 7 October 1936. From *The Hindu*, 8 October 1936.

May I say in passing something which is wholly personal, which has nothing to do with you, but which perhaps might interest you. It is this. I do not like this talk in our country of the Congress president being elected for three years and the like. I think it exhibits an utterly wrong mentality. It exhibits fundamentally a fascist mentality. I, for one, am not going to be any party to the development of that mentality in India. I do not want you to take anything that I might say as the truth or the right thing. I only want to tickle your minds and make you discuss with each other, make you come to a decision, provisionally or otherwise, and to change your decisions if other facts come before you. I want you to move mentally as I want you to move physically occasionally. That is why I want you to take what I say as something more or less provisional.

Yesterday I said that I had a very serious failing for a politician. I often took leave of the present. A politician has no business to do that, because his chief functions are in the present. Often I lose myself in the past. That, as you know, is a failing of the age. Oftener perhaps I lose myself in dreaming of the future. That, I hope, is something in favour of youth. And so between that past and the future that one tries to get a glimpse into, I have a feeling of unreality in the present; and that is a vital failing for a politician. But when I meet vigorous young people, I live in the present and also dream of the future. Thus I have a feeling of the present also. I try to build the future on the present and to connect the two together. So, somehow, the picture before me is strangely mixed up between the past and the present and the future that is to come.

A month or two ago I happened to be far away from Madras, in the north-west corner of India, in the Indus valley. I stood before the ruins of Mohenjo Daro. They fascinate me. I have been there previously. Although this time I went there on a political mission, I could not resist the temptation to steal a few hours to look at the ruins again, not only to look at them, but to dream of the enormous past that lies behind our country. You will remember that Mohenjo Daro dates between five and six thousand years back. When I thought of those six thousand years of India's history, very glorious years some of them, bad and shameful years others of them, ups and downs, somehow I felt the present was an insignificant part of that long history, this unhappy present. Some of us imagine that this past, the unhappy period of 150 years or so—for Madras it is a longer period—is something which is almost lost in the mist of time, is something which we cannot get rid of, which pursues us, clings to us and sticks to us. Now that is a feeling that one can understand, because the present is always

a mountain to us. It looms large. Our troubles as students or family men may be very little; but for the moment they overpower you, excite you. Soon after, you may forget that trouble. It will become the past. You will say it does not matter. So also, in the history of nations, the present may seem very big, very unhappy and very important. But, yet it will be very little, if you consider it with that long perspective, that long range history can give you. There is no country on the face of the earth that has a longer perspective of history than India has. Therefore, standing there in the ruins of Mohenjo Daro and thinking of that long perspective, these 150 years of British domination in India seem to lose all significance for me, seem to be just a tiny bit in the long period, just a page in the long chapter. And then, I tried to look with a longer perspective and although it was a dim perspective, it was a perspective of the future, I tried to think what was going to happen in the world and in India, how we are going to be prepared for it, how we are going to fashion our country and our individual lives for it.

Why I have mentioned this to you is to develop not that vague dreamy roaming mind which unhappily sometimes I possess, but a certain perspective which will take you out, but not detach you, from today. We dare not take ourselves out of it. That is a weak man's way of escaping the present-day problems. We dare not escape from today. We have to think of today and conquer today. If we think of yesterday and still more so if we think of tomorrow, today does not oppress us quite so much. Then we get a right view, a right perspective.

You see in the country today, even in the National Congress, conflicts of opinion, arguments and heated debates, and some of you imagine, and some people are interested in stressing and emphasising that the Congress is splitting up, breaking up and all manner of tendency is arising within the Congress which will weaken our national front.

I want you to consider what this nationalist movement has been. It has grown up in the past slowly and gradually, and almost imperceptibly. And today, you find it functioning in a powerful, magnificent manner in the country. I dare say, speaking of subject countries and nationalistic movements in subject countries, there is no parallel in history, to such a powerful movement being built up as the Indian National Congress. It is not a matter for cheering. Many factors have gone towards it. But still, the fact remains that we have built a magnificent movement, of which the living embodiment is the Indian National Congress. Go into its history. You will find in the early days, fifty years ago, a number of very respectable individuals meeting

together, a small group of upper class people meeting together, and talking in terms of the crudest loyalty. Now it is astonishing, when we read the speeches of those days today, how they managed to say those things which even the feeblest and the weakest of our people will not dream of saying today. Yet what they said were not the sayings of weak men. They were brave men, strong men. The situation had not developed sufficiently and they thought in a particular manner. So the Congress began more or less representing the upper layer of the middle class in India. Gradually the other classes rolled into it. Then, you find in the intervening stages, a gradual conflict coming into the Congress, a conflict of ideals, of different groups which were represented in the early years of this twentieth century, the conflict between the so-called extremists and the moderates, between the followers of Tilak and those of Gokhale. Now, we are too apt to think today, and we were even more then, to think in terms of personalities. They were great persons, Tilak and Gokhale. We must not be dazzled by their greatness, but rather seek the cause underlying those conflicts of ideals. We find that Tilak represented the coming of the lower middle class into the nationalistic movement. It was this lower middle class emerging gradually and coming into the Congress, that frightened the upper middle class. Roughly speaking, the conflict between the extremists and the moderates in the Congress was the conflict between the rising lower middle class and the established upper middle class. That conflict went on for a number of years. To begin with, the impact swept the lower middle class outside the Congress although it was larger in number. Ultimately it could not be kept out. A certain handful of the upper middle class, not the whole, did not like this new turn of affairs and they left the Congress and formed the Liberal Party. Many of the upper middle class still remained in the Congress. Gradually there was a change in the whole tone and outlook. The Congress became much more influenced by the desire and the needs of the lower middle class, and inevitably it became more extreme in its outlook and more given to action rather than activities purely of an academic kind. Later came Gandhiji into the fold, a very great and powerful personality. He brought all the remaining fragments of the lower middle classes into the Congress. He also brought other powerful factors. Although he did not actually bring in the peasants and the masses into the Congress, he brought their influence, their thoughts, their desires and their wants, very much into the Congress, because he himself represented them to an astounding degree. The Congress became predominantly a lower middle class organisation. That was the origin of the Gandhi Congress today. Because the masses

came in, we had those powerful movements—noncooperation, civil disobedience and the like.

We were unfortunate to lose a group of Liberals. But however unfortunate it might have been it was perhaps a thing which nobody could control. In a sense, that might be considered a split within the Congress, for some estimable people left the Congress. The reason for it was not a resolution here or a decision there, but the fact that a large number of others came into the Congress, whose general views, not only views but looks and dresses, they disliked. That is to say, in the balance, although we lost a group which we should have liked to have kept with us, we gained a large number of others and the Congress, even after the departure of the Liberal group from us, was a far more powerful body than it had been before. So in spite of that split with the Liberals, the Congress gained in strength because more people from the masses, a large number of them, joined the Congress.

The same process took place when Mahatma Gandhi came into the movement. Again, the Congress lost some people who had worked along with it for many years. They left because they did not like the look of the Gandhian Congress. They did not like the new talk of noncooperation. The whole Congress changed. It began to talk a new language, not much of English but the language of the country, dressed in the dress of the country and began to think in terms of the country. Behind this noncooperation were all manner of unknown factors. Some old Congressmen left, but again we find that although they left, the Congress became a far more powerful thing than it had been before, because a vast number of people came into it. Always you have this choice before you. However much we may regret individuals going out of the Congress—we want to keep them, we want as broad a national front as possible—we have to choose occasionally between the few and the many, between old and expired notions and ideas and new, dynamic, vitalising ideas which lead you to action, which bring into your fold vast numbers of people. Why do they bring vast numbers? Because they interpret the urges, desires and wants of those large numbers of people. The Congress, with all its failings—they are many, let us admit it—with all its mistakes, tried to keep in touch with those wants and desires and that is why it has become the powerful organisation it has been for the last few years. You must think, if you really want to increase the strength of the country, not in terms of individuals, not in terms of gaining the goodwill of this person or that person even though he might be a desirable individual, but in terms of large numbers, of the masses of the people, peasantry or workers or the vast numbers of middle class people of this country.

We talk about the problems of peasants and workers and rightly too. After all, this country is a peasant country. Our main problem is the peasant problem, the land problem. All the other problems sink into insignificance before it. And yet, you know that today even with educated people, people who go through universities, life is not a bed of roses. They have to face the problem of unemployment. Middle class unemployment today is a tremendous factor in India. It is a growing factor. There is no way out. Whether you function as ministers under the new Act or not, there is no way out of it under the present structure of the steel frame of the British administration in India. In order to solve that problem of unemployment, whether of the middle class or of the peasantry or of the industrial workers, you have to go outside that frame and picture, and think in different terms and lay down different boundaries. Therefore today you are in the grip of this problem of unemployment as much as the peasants.

We talk of the proletariat, of socialism and communism and the rest of it, but I must consider that in a country like India under the domination of a foreign imperialistic power, the whole population is the proletariat of the other country. That is the scientific analysis according to communism and socialism. In a sense, if you consider the question of India and England, India becomes a kind of rural area attached to the urban area of England, and as the urban areas have the habit of exploiting rural areas, we become the proletariat of the entire people of England, though it might be that the profits go only into a limited number of pockets. That is why there is the nationalistic urge in us for political freedom and that is why in any crisis all of us, even those who imagine that they are themselves out of it, come into the grip of poverty and unemployment.

How are you going to face these problems and how are you going to face the bigger problems that the world is going to thrust before you? I should like you to consider these in relation to the big world issues. You cannot possibly separate these problems. They are inextricably mixed up together. In whatever profession you are, you must face them. Supposing you are a trader, you will inevitably be mixed up with international trade. Some of you may become bankrupt without any mismanagement on your part, but because the price of a certain commodity has fallen very low. In the last few years, there has been a terrible depression in the world, a trade depression, a slump in trade, which is affecting not only the business classes but all classes, and especially the peasants, tremendously. Even when the harvest is good, the peasants are not better off. We have come to a stage when, however good the harvest might be, it does no good to the peasant. In

America, the state is giving bounties to the farmers to burn their crops. Can you imagine anything more foolish than that? Even in rich America, there are today thirteen millions of unemployed and many of them are hard up, starving, with no place to take shelter in. That is the stage of civilisation which we have reached under the sway of capitalism in the world. In India, we do not quite see the tremendous happenings because of the fact that ours is not a fully capitalist country. We are still a semi-feudal country. We have acute unemployment with prospects of its growth, and in order to understand it and in order to find a solution for it, you have to think in terms of the wider problems of the world. You should prepare yourselves for the big things that are going to happen. Whatever is going to happen, we are not going to have a quiet life and a static life.

A famous Frenchman has said that right from the beginning of the twentieth century, there has been no period which has been so fundamentally revolutionary than this period and the age in which we live. Ever since the Great War began in 1914, there has been revolution in all parts of the world. The Russian revolution, the upheavals in Germany and the present terrible war in Spain are simply a prelude to a devastating change in the future. If there are people in this country who do not like revolution, who do not like a big change, then I think they have chosen a very wrong moment to be born in, because they cannot escape it. We cannot escape the elemental and natural forces working through the myriads of human beings. No doubt, human beings are bound to be sensible, thinking and thoughtful, but they cannot escape these elemental forces. You will see, before very long in the world, tremendous human cyclones; and if these happen, it is obvious that India will be affected by them. Are we prepared to meet the situation?

Our political and economic problems are very important. Without solving them we cannot do anything. But, after all, political freedom is not an end in itself. It is a means whereby we can live a good life, and a means of solving the problem of human relationship. But we will not be able to move on unless the political and economic obstacles are removed. We have to reach conclusions about them so that we might build the India of the future. These are the problems which you, as students, should think about.

You have stated in your address that I am a socialist. It is quite true and I am rather conceited about it. But allow me to say that socialist as I am, to some extent, I am a weak man. I am not a believer in dogmas. If you accept a dogma there is a sort of compulsion which I hate whether in religion or in politics. People accuse

me that I am not definite. I am definite so far as today and tomorrow are concerned. But I am not definite about the day after. I am not definite because I want to adapt myself to the changing conditions. All the time I want to be thinking about this. I do not want preconceived ideas and formulas to influence me. I want you also to adopt that attitude of open mind. It is not entirely a logical way of thinking, but I feel that way. I hope you will all consider these problems, discuss them and have heated debates about them and whenever the occasion comes act up to your convictions.

When I heard that the students of Madras have no organisations, I was surprised. Wherever you go in Oxford or Cambridge you will find numerous students' organisations bubbling with life. They discuss all sorts of problems. I am surprised to see the lack of interest in the Indian student in world problems. It is not enough that you gather on occasions to present addresses. That is certainly a pleasant function. But I should like you to interest yourself in all matters and organise yourself. I hope that Madras will build up a strong students' organisation.

You have presented me with a heavy purse. I thank you for it, but let me tell you, you have put me in a great difficulty. Money must be always accepted if it is presented. There are plenty of good causes which require money. But when I go out on a Congress tour, I do not encourage the presentation of purses except for Congress purposes. There are many other funds, charitable funds, for which I have myself issued appeals, but I do not encourage presentation of purses during a tour on behalf of the Congress for purposes other than Congress work. You have specified that the money should be spent on the spread of socialist ideology. It is dear to me and I should like it to spread, but it is not obviously the Congress ideology at present, and I cannot therefore utilise the money in any department of the Congress. You have put me in a difficulty and I shall have to think about it and may have to consult you about it before I decide what to do with it. I thank you again for the address of welcome.

11. On the Importance of the Land Problem

I thank you for the address, and I am especially grateful for such messages when they come from the peasantry with whom I have been connected in my province for the last seventeen years. I do not know in any detail the problems of the peasantry in these parts. Generally of course I am acquainted with the broad questions which affect you as they affect other peasants elsewhere. But even without knowing the details of these questions, I think any person who is acquainted with the situation in India, political and economic, is bound to come to the conclusion that the great fundamental problem of India today is the land problem. There is no doubt about it in my mind. If we talk about Swaraj or independence, essentially it is in order to face and solve this problem as well as others. It is because we cannot move in the direction of solving this problem or any other major problem that we should remove the obstacles which foreign domination puts in our way. Therefore whether you stand for the peasants or the workers or any class or group in India, it is your and their common interest to remove that obstacle. And that is commonly known as the nationalist urge, which ought to be common to every person in India except those groups, those very small groups, which flourish because of that foreign domination. Leaving those small groups aside, which are usually the products of that foreign domination, all other groups, to whatever class they may belong, have a common interest in removing those obstacles caused by foreign domination. While you work for the solution of that political problem in common with others, you are always thinking that that political solution should be such as to enable you and the country to solve the other problems with a view to ending the exploitation of the peasantry.

Now today, as I said, the real major problem of the country is the land problem. We do not talk about it so much. That is to say, our newspapers or prominent people are often discussing many other problems which are no doubt important in themselves but which, on the whole, sink almost into insignificance when you think of India in terms of this great peasant problem. They are insignificant from the point of view of numbers alone, because the peasant problem affects the vast population of India; and they are also insignificant from other

1. Speech at the meeting of the South Indian Federation of Peasants and Workers, Madras, 7 October 1936. From *The Hindu*, 8 October 1936.

points of view, and relatively they pale into insignificance. And yet, there is far more talk about those relatively minor matters and far less of this tremendous thing that overshadows India. That is likely to make a great difference in the India of the future.

Why is it that, in almost every part of India today, there is a tremendous ferment in the rural areas—whether it is in the zamindari areas, big talukdari areas, as in my province, or in Bengal or Bihar, which are the three main talukdari and zamindari provinces, or in the ryotwari provinces like the Punjab or the Central Provinces or the major part of the Madras Presidency? Conditions differ to some extent, the problems of the peasants differ, and yet, there is a common ferment going on all over. They do not themselves understand exactly what they want. But they understand what they want immediately. It is a smaller payment of revenue, remission of revenue or debt or water rates or various other things that they suffer from. These are legal things quite apart from the innumerable illegal exactions they have to put up with.

In a district in Oudh, I was told about fifty two different types of illegal exactions which the talukdars are exacting. Even allowing for exaggeration, it is a prodigious list. In the Punjab it is a problem relating to the small peasant proprietors who are usually considered to be the bulwarks of the social system. However much the British Government wants to help them, it cannot give them much remission in the way of revenue, because if that is done, the whole structure will go bankrupt. There seems to be no obvious way out of it. It is becoming increasingly difficult for the petty zamindars of the Punjab to pay their revenue; and there is the question of agricultural debts also. Taking all these together a problem is arising which, under the present circumstances, is an insoluble one. There is the solution of death by famine, flood, etc. Leaving all these out, under the present economic and political structure of the British Government in India, the land problem is an insoluble one. Therefore it becomes necessary and essential for us to find what changes we will have to make in the political and economic structure so as to enable us to solve the land problem as well as other problems.

Mind you, under the new Act, of which we thoroughly disapprove, under this new constitution which is coming down upon us, whatever power you may have in the provinces, fundamentally we move within that steel frame structure of the British Government. Therefore that Act is a futile thing so far as any solution to our problems is concerned. These are some general considerations which I have to put before you. I do not think it is enough to live on slogans, to shout

slogans and generally make it appear that it is really a question of smashing individually rich people who might be exploiting the masses. It is a far more intricate and difficult problem. We have to think not in terms of just removing a few ordinary individuals. We have to change the system and it is no good our blaming them. We may blame particular individuals for particular exactions, but it is no good our blaming a capitalist because he is a capitalist, a zamindar because he is a zamindar. He is a product of the system in which all of us have been brought up and bred. The very best of the zamindars, talukdars and capitalists cannot do very much, however well-intentioned they might be, so long as that system flourishes. So our wrath should be directed not against individuals but against the system which is injurious.

I have been asked: "Why do you criticise zamindars and want to do away with them? Have you not met good, honest nationalist zamindars?" It is an absurd question to put. Of course I know good honest nationalist zamindars as well as good honest nationalist capitalists. But it is not a question of their honesty or dishonesty. There are good and bad zamindars just as there are good and bad tenants and peasants. But the point is that a certain system which flourishes today is not good for the country or for the masses of the people. It crushes them; it exploits them. It does not make much difference who is working the machine. It is no good to know that a God-fearing man is working the machine. There is so much talk about Indianisation of the services.² It may have some force or some reason. But again it comes to this, that you want to change the person who is working the machine. Instead of the Englishman, you want an Indian to be in charge of that machine. It is no satisfaction to me to know that an Indian sits upon me. I want to get rid of the burden. Therefore we must view this question in a more fundamental and basic way. We must consider the question dispassionately and impersonally.

While it is necessary for big economic groups like the peasants and the workers to form their own organisations for the redress of their grievances, they cannot fundamentally remove those grievances till we get Swaraj. That is true. Yet it is possible for them, if they are strong enough, to remove certain grievances even before Swaraj. In any event, a mere attempt to remove those grievances in an organised way strengthens them and will enable them in future to play a more

2. There was a persistent demand during this period in the Central Legislature and outside for recruiting large numbers of Indians into the defence and the covenanted services.

and more important part in the political struggle for the country and in the subsequent social changes that might be brought about. Therefore such organisations of the peasants and workers are to be welcomed, and it is desirable that they should function in the closest cooperation with the National Congress. They need not, they cannot, expect the National Congress to adopt their programme in toto. It is a nationalist organisation consisting of many groups and classes. But they should attempt to influence it more and more, to pull it in their direction. That indeed is what has been happening during the last fifteen or sixteen years. The more the Congress has looked to the masses, inevitably it has had to think in terms of the good of the masses, and it has gradually adopted the cause of the masses.

You have mentioned in the address that the economic needs and demands of the peasants and workers should be made the main plank of the economic programme of the Indian National Congress. At the last session of the Congress at Lucknow, a resolution was passed calling upon the All India Congress Committee, in consultation with provincial Congress committees, including peasants' organisations, to draw up an agrarian programme for the country. At the present moment various provincial Congress committees are in the process of drawing up a programme. The Congress, being what it is, cannot be expected to become completely a peasants' organisation. It will come nearer and nearer to the peasants the more the peasants come into it both individually, as they should, and in an organised way as they might in future. But you must not grow indignant with the Congress. That is absurd. I am glad you are going to issue some kind of a journal³ for the benefit of your movement amongst the kisans, and I wish your Federation and your newspaper all success.

3. *Vahini*, a Telugu bi-weekly.

12. For Unity in the Labour Movement¹

I am glad to attend this great meeting of the workers of Madras. I would like to tell you much, but the meeting is so big and tremendous that I am afraid it will not be possible for everybody to hear me

1. Madras, 7 October 1936. From *The Hindu*, 8 October 1936.

or for the meeting to continue for a sufficiently long time. Therefore, I propose to tell you just a few things which I think you ought to know.

The first thing is that you are workers in factories and your immediate troubles are the troubles which you have to face in your factories. It is in order to protect your interests as workers that you have organised yourselves in trade unions. That is right, because that must be the immediate object of the worker, to protect himself, to organise himself and to resist the assaults of his employer on his wages, and on his standard of life.

What is the worker? What strength has the poor worker got? He can be knocked down; he can be kicked and cuffed and dealt with in any way that an employer might choose. One worker, or one peasant has no strength. But if they organise themselves, they will have great strength. A ten thousand, a hundred thousand and a million workers, organised, will have great strength. Therefore, strength lies, for you, in organisation. It does not lie in begging and pleading for justice and mercy. It lies in organisation and in your helping each other whenever you are in trouble. This is the whole history of the workers' movement in the world and this has taught us that the only way for workers to protect their interests and to save themselves is to organise into trade unions and to stand shoulder to shoulder whenever there is attack on any single person. I hope that you have learnt that lesson.

You must also learn another lesson. Employers of course always try to break trade unions. They try to weaken them because they are afraid of a strong aggressive trade union movement. Therefore they put difficulties in the way. They try to start rival trade unions which are really no trade unions at all, which they try to induce the workers to join so that real trade unions might suffer. You should beware of the unions started by employers. Their purpose is not to strengthen the workers' movement, but to weaken and destroy it. Their purpose is, when workers go on a strike, to break that strike. Their purpose is to supply black-legs when there is a crisis in the labour movement. Therefore, workers must always remember this and support and strengthen the real trade unions. You should remember also that the strength of the labour movement in India does not consist merely in your particular trade union in Madras. It consists in all the trade unions in India working together in one great labour movement. The labour movement in India has split into separate federations and organisations and congresses. And since it is so split up, it has become weak and unable to protect the workers from the attacks that are made on them. This has been the fate of the Indian workers' movement during the last six or seven years. It is high time that you and all Indian workers learn

a lesson from it. What lesson have you learnt during the last six or seven years? What lesson has the labour movement learnt after these splits and divisions of the last few years? It seems to me, unhappily, that the movement is still carrying on in the same old way and in the same foolish way without profiting from past experience.

The lesson that you should have learnt, that you must learn and which you can forget only at your peril, is this, that you should have a unified and strong labour movement in India. Those who work for unity in the labour movement in India, work for the betterment of the workers. Those who work against that unity, whatever their intentions may be, are doing a great disservice to the cause of the Indian workers' movement. Therefore it is up to the rank and file of the workers in India to press for this unity in the labour movement, to shout for it, to make it clear to their leaders that they insist on having it. There will always be people who are interested, for various reasons, in not advancing the cause of unity amongst the workers. I hope that labour in Madras will insist on this unity of labour in the country.

You have also to face larger problems. We talk of Swaraj in the country and of the Indian National Congress fighting for Swaraj and independence. How do these things affect you? Perhaps many of you may think that these have nothing to do with you, that so far as you are concerned, it is none of your business to try to get Swaraj. But if any of you think so, though there are not many who would be so foolish as to think so, you are in the wrong, because if Swaraj is necessary for India, if Swaraj is urgently needed, it is not for those at the top and for the well-to-do people, but for the poor people, the workers and the peasants who cannot any longer do without it.

Swaraj means ultimately the power to redress the grievances of the people. The Swaraj we are working for is a Swaraj of the Indian masses, a Swaraj in which workers all over the country will have an effective voice. We want Swaraj in order to remedy the ills and redress the grievances of the people, and we can only do that when the Indian people themselves have power in their hands. Therefore it becomes necessary for the workers to work and fight for Swaraj. The Indian National Congress is our great organisation and is fighting for Swaraj. Therefore it is necessary for us, whether we are peasants, workers, shopkeepers or others, to support that great national organisation in its fight for Swaraj. The workers have also to carry on their fight at the same time as they carry on the fight for Swaraj. They have also to carry it on in such a way that when Swaraj comes they may be able to have in it an effective share.

The strength of the worker lies in his organisation, in his trade union. Therefore, he must do everything he can to support and strengthen this trade union. Once a trade union weakens, there is little hope for the worker. I want you to understand that a trade union means a trade union started, supported, organised and generally supervised and controlled by the workers and their friends. It does not mean one started by the owners of the factories or the mills. It is the duty of every worker to shun and keep away from these employers' unions and the so-called welfare associations. In this connection I have been told that there is some kind of employers' organisation here which always tries to undermine and dig underneath the other trade union, so much so that it has been putting up candidates in opposition to the candidates of the trade union for the municipal elections. I know nothing about these matters and hesitate to give you advice concerning matters I do not know about. But I think the principle is quite clear, that you should consider that, even as an employers' union is a body to be avoided at all costs, so are its candidates.

Lastly, your union as well as other unions in the country must join together. Unless you have a united labour movement, one group of unions will be played off against another and the result will be that you cannot get what you want. Therefore, it is essential for workers in the country to have a unified labour movement, to press for it and to insist on having it. I see absolutely no reason why there should be no such movement. So far as I know, the minds of the workers and even of their organisers have been trying for a united labour movement. It is their misfortune that in spite of their attempts it has not come off yet. Anyhow, if you and other workers put up a united effort for it, you will succeed. Another point which is more or less subsidiary to the previous one is that you must not bring the Hindu-Muslim question into the workers' movement. It has done enough mischief elsewhere. I hope that in the workers' movement it will have absolutely no place. When people talk of Hindu unions and Muslim unions—that way lies madness. Therefore I hope that whether you are Hindus or Muslims you will function together, fight for the cause of labour and for the cause of the country, which ultimately is the cause of the masses.

13. Socialism and Nationalism¹

I have glanced through some of the addresses presented to me and they, or most of them, seem to have come from young people socialistically inclined. That is good; for youth is good and socialism is good and both, when they go together, are doubly good. But still, I do feel that in these addresses and other demonstrations, where socialism is boomed up—I like that atmosphere and I like the thought behind the slogans but I do not like sometimes the greater absence of thought behind the slogans—many of those persons who talk so loudly about socialism have not really considered the question. They applaud it and think of socialism in terms of anti-this, anti-that or anti a particular thing. Socialism, as most other isms, has inevitably to oppose those who are opposed to it. Inevitably, if there are obstructions put in its way, socialism has to take a good big broom and sweep away those obstructions. But it is not anti-anything; it is not anti-zamindar or anti-capitalist. If a certain system like the peasant-proprietor land system comes in the way of a socialistic reorganisation of society, it is right that that particular land system should be put an end to and another evolved. If a certain system called the capitalist system requires change, development and extension, it is right that we should give that extension and effect the change or development. But that does not mean that socialism is a matter of merely combating capitalism. It is a question of developing capitalism. It does not mean that we are out just to chase out and pursue and otherwise put an end to the tribe of landlords, capitalists and the rest. It is absurd. It does not mean anything of that sort. It means that we are out to change a particular system of which even its representatives are helpless victims. Therefore, I want you to think a little more in terms of fundamental matters and theories and not of repetition of slogans and the rest. I want you, young men and those who are attracted to socialism, to study it and study it not merely to learn a few phrases and technical words, but to understand the real thought behind it, to understand how it has grown under special circumstances in Europe.

It is a product of the growing industrialism of Europe. It has come into existence as a kind of product—I have called it, sometimes, the

1. Speech at Madras, 8 October 1936. From *The Hindu*, 8 October 1936.

daughter—of capitalism. Call them sisters, if you like; they have come together. They are intimately allied. As modern industrialism has grown in the West, as capitalism has grown so socialism has grown, in a humanitarian way at first and then gradually coming to grips with the subject, itself becoming more and more scientific, though not, of course, absolutely mathematically precise—because we have to deal with human beings and societies and we cannot be so precise—but still precise enough to help us to think and to give us some indication of the road we have to travel. All that is the product of certain conditions which prevailed during the last hundred years. This idea is almost a hundred years old, not in its modern form but in the form which preceded it. The actual modern form is just about forty or fifty years old. You must see that in relation to past history and environment and then you will understand it.

What happens very often is this: you transplant phrases and words and apply them bodily to Indian conditions today. I am quite convinced that the socialist analysis helps us to understand conditions everywhere, whether it be Europe, China or India. I am quite convinced that the fundamental thought behind socialism, the theory of socialism, can be and will be made to apply to all countries of the world within a fairly short space of time, as time is counted in terms not of human life but of the life of nations. But that does not mean that I believe that we must blindly and foolishly apply it in the particular manner that it might have been applied in any other country. It does not mean that you and I should sit down and blindly copy what has been done in Russia or what might have been in any other country. That is not socialism. That is simply bigotry and blindness. The very first thing that socialism or, in a scientific sense, Marxism teaches us is this: that we must not be dogmatic about it. It indicates lines of vision and activity. It says it is only an indication to help us to think along those lines, that we must study the objective conditions of the country and adapt our activity and thought to those conditions, of course, within the framework of socialistic theory. The greatest of the Marxists of modern times, Lenin, was never tired of repeating that it is folly for persons to go about saying, say, in England or Germany, that they will do what Russia has done. The English or German people, when they want socialism, will, of course, adopt its fundamental principles—such as suppression of profit in industrial production and consumption—but they will do it in accordance with their own conditions and needs. Suppose England went socialist or communist today—England I think is in a far better condition to become communist today than Russia is even after its eighteen years' effort,

because Russia started from a very low level and a much more backward condition and it wants time, still. It has grown at a tremendous pace, at a marvellous pace; it is astounding what Russia has done. It has, of course, committed many things which many do not like, which I utterly dislike. But in thinking of the economic changes in Russia, I think it is amazing to see what has been done. But great as her record is, Russia has not caught up the countries which have been growing for the last century and a half industrially. Probably in the last ten years, Russia has made greater progress than most other countries would have in fifty years. That is certainly a tremendous pace. It may be that in another ten or fifteen years, it may go ahead of the most industrialised countries of the world. That is possible. But if England turns communist or socialist, it starts from a very high standard of life, of industrial development and the like. England is in a position immediately to become far more socialist than a country which has been backward. Therefore you cannot copy one country in another. You can profit by the example of another country and study its translation of theory into practice. It is tremendously helpful. But, remember, Russia had to do without an example. It had no 'practice' before it. It had all theory. It had mugged up the theory well enough, but it had to apply it in its own way. It applied it in a good way, not afraid of changing its method whenever it went wrong. People who had no vision said that Russia did this and that, sat down and criticised, not realising that Russia was, for the moment, exhibiting a quality which is a very valuable one in human beings and in nations—the quality of profiting by experience, changing by experience and not remaining 'stick-in-the-mud.' Russia, in the course of its affairs, has repeatedly changed its policy, but of course not in fundamentals.

But I am not here to talk about Russia. I am only telling you that socialism when it is applied to India, will have, I think, to fall within the wide framework of socialistic theory. The manner of its application, the speed of its application and the measures for its application, will, however, have to depend on Indian conditions. They will have to depend on Indian industrial conditions, Indian cultural conditions and, to some extent, on what may be called the genius of the Indian people. All these will have to be taken together. Therefore it is impossible for anyone now to state which particular shape, form or colour the future socialist organisation of India will take. You can generally say what its probable shape or form or colour might be. But as to the exact form or as to how long it will take to get into that form, nobody can say anything definitely now. It will be foolish to be dogmatic about it because you cannot know.

None the less, if we really want to understand and prepare ourselves for that socialist India, we have to think hard and deep. We have to see it in connection with our present struggle for freedom and independence. If you isolate it from that, you function in the air. To-day, the hunger and poverty of the Indian people are inevitably driving them to socialistic thought. Why do you talk of socialism to me, young men and women all over the country? Not because a few odd persons have been delivering speeches about it but because of the growing middle class unemployment in the country. Because of that, you are forced to examine the problem and to think. Because you think of it and examine it, you are driven in the direction of accepting socialism. So, there is a growing urge to socialism and that will go on increasing. But remember this, that the dominant urge in India today, the dominant urge in any country that is a subject country, inevitably must be the nationalist urge. Whilst I tell you socialism is not an 'anti' thing, nationalism, I think, is an 'anti' thing fundamentally. I do not want to be 'anti' anything, unless it be solid, constructive and health-giving. The fact remains that essentially the background of nationalism is anti-foreign. It derives its strength not so much from love but from dislike. It is to some extent a racial matter, although we may not think on racial lines. I want to tell you I dislike nationalism. But I do like nationalism so far as India is concerned, situated as it is today, because nationalism for us means that it takes us in the direction of our freedom and of our own growth physically, mentally, morally and spiritually. For us, nationalism is a releasing force, and therefore, it is good. But nationalism in a country like Germany today or Italy is not a force which takes one to freedom. It confines and restricts. It is a narrowing thing.

It is not an enlarging thing. Therefore nationalism in Europe today has become a bane and a curse. Therefore, progressive people of Europe today feel insulted if you call them nationalists and they ask you, "Do you think we are narrow-minded, bigoted people, fascists or nazis?" Nationalism is a confined and excessively narrow creed there. But it is a definitely different thing here in India. But still, the fact remains that the background of nationalism is not so much, I think, an active positive feeling as a negative feeling.

You know that in the past eighteen or twenty years, we in India have had a unique experience, the experience of a great and inspiring leader dinning into our ears the doctrine of nonviolence, peace and goodwill and love for our opponent. That continuous dinning and teaching has inevitably produced a certain atmosphere in the country. It has not wholly got rid of the background of nationalism, viz.,

the 'anti' element in it, but has reduced it to a minimum. Ordinarily a nationalist movement like ours, if we had not that continuous pressure from our leader in the direction of peace and goodwill, would have resulted in something terribly racial, anti-foreign, devouring and consuming us and perhaps occasionally giving us a certain energy to go ahead, but ultimately making us much smaller men. And the solution of the problem would have, quite apart from the moral issue, become much more difficult; because it is difficult to solve problems by accumulating violence and hatred.

Although we have functioned as a nationalist movement and our nationalism has been of a fairly intense variety, yet it has led to relatively little of the bitterness that is the natural line of nationalism elsewhere. But I cannot say that we have escaped those hatreds and bitter-nesses altogether. We have them still in our hearts and sometimes they come out, if not against our opponents, at least against our own colleagues.

The problem before us is, nationalism being the dominant urge of the country and socialism being, according to you and me, the right path to tread to solve the problems which face us, how to combine the two? We cannot have one of the two alone, because nationalism alone does not solve the problem and to follow socialism alone will be to ignore the vital issue before the country and the vital urge which moves millions in the country. We have to combine the two. Socialism has inevitably to push nationalism forward in its political garb. That is the common aspect between socialism and nationalism. Both like political independence. But nationalism, more or less, stops there, while socialism wants to go ahead. Socialism, if it is wise, presses forward with its ideas and turns nationalism in its direction. At the same time it does not combat with nationalism because the first tremendous step is common to both. Socialism wants to cooperate with nationalism, cooperate not only with the socialist elements and others who are friendly to socialism but even with anti-socialist elements in that nationalism. Without that proviso, there can be no cooperation, because there is no common ground left.

I hope you who talk in terms of socialism will remember that you may not, dare not, use the term "socialism" and socialistic slogans as an excuse for inaction in the political and nationalist field. If you do, you will bring disrepute to the name of socialism.

14. Socialism and the Indian Struggle¹

I do not quite know what to say about "Socialism and the Indian Struggle", because at this very moment there is a real struggle going on outside the hall. It is astonishing to find that in Madras microphones have not come into general use. You have a small hall for the purpose of this meeting; perhaps this is the biggest hall available. It is difficult to concentrate on a subject with these disturbances and noise outside the meeting hall.

I am coming from another meeting and the contrast between that meeting and the present one is terribly marked. I have been asked to talk about socialism. I am not much impressed with this audience nor is there the spirit of socialism in it. At the other meeting, I saw before me nearly fifty to sixty thousand human beings who were in the midst of a daily struggle for a living and thinking only in terms of that struggle. It is to those people that socialism can bring some relief from their sufferings.

We talk and discuss about socialism and it is right that we question intellectually and in a scientific way and come to some conclusions. But all this will mean less than nothing if you do not have the real background. I was invited to tea by the socialists of Madras and I went there. I found various slogans up against the walls. They are good slogans. I like them. But they will be wholly meaningless to the average peasant or worker in India. I have seen in big gatherings people coming with posters carrying such slogans. But what does it convey to the poor peasants who are thinking in terms of revenue, rent, taxes and debts? It will mean nothing to them.

I want you to feel that you cannot build up socialism or spread the socialistic ideology in this way. You have to get at the back of the worker's mind, think in his terms, use his language and sometimes undergo his sufferings. Then only will you develop socialism in India. We are too apt to think of it in terms of slogans with a century of European history behind them. They have value in the West. But they have no such history in India and our position in India is different. If we have to spread the gospel of socialism in India, we have to translate it not only into the Indian languages, but interpret it more and more in terms of

1. Speech at the Gokhale Hall, Madras, 8 October 1936. From *The Hindu*, 9 October 1936.

the Indian genius. I do not mean that it will take a century to develop this idea. The fundamentals will remain the same, but it will take some time to spread. So far as I am concerned, I have always an open mind, and I want to change my ideas to suit them to changing conditions.

I do believe that socialism, or to give it a more scientific name, Marxism, does give a clue to the past and the present, helps us in tackling all manner of problems in history, politics, sociology and economics. That is my general attitude towards it. It is not obviously the attitude of the orthodox. I accept that general outlook, because it helps me to understand and act. I am groping and trying to find out how to interpret the gospel of socialism in terms of the Indian struggle.

What I am troubled about is not so much the fine points in the theory of socialistic ideology. I want to understand the right approaches to it. If you ask me what is the meaning of the surplus value theory of Marx I do not consider myself competent to answer it. I should like to be an expert and I should like to learn more and more about it. My mind is at present engaged not with these subtle theories and metaphysical questions which sometimes give rise to heated debates and splits among the socialists and the communists, but rather with the interpretation of the fundamental ideas of socialism in India, in order to make those ideas fit in with our conditions and to make them somehow enter into the minds of the Indian peasants and workers, and the Indian middle class men.

When you ask me to deliver addresses, what I say, probably, will not be what you expected. This long preamble to the subject was not expected by you. May be, you expected some exhortations from me to gallant action. Of course, one wants gallant action in life. But gallant action does not necessarily come from exhortations. The real problem before you and before us is this: How are we to apply these ideas to conditions in India? It is not enough that we shout slogans that have no value in India and might not apply to India.

I will now take you with me along another line of thought. The thing about socialism that appeals to me tremendously is the way it somehow gives us a certain dignity, a truer understanding of the sufferings and the tremendous tragedies of humanity. We have seen and we have got used to these and most of us have suffered like dumb-driven cattle, because we had to. That suffering continues today and at present it is growing intenser. But it makes all the difference whether you endure the suffering like mere animals or like human beings trying to get rid of it, combating obstacles and trying to overcome them.

Socialism has come into the field of human thought. Some say that it has brought conflicts, increased class hatred, and made people hate

and dislike others who exploit them. Partly that was the inevitable product of socialism and partly it had nothing to do with it because it does not teach hatred of individuals. It teaches hatred of systems which are bad. Socialism removes the veil from our eyes and tells us how all life, everything in the world today governing society, is almost entirely based on exploitation. That struggle goes on, and if you want to find a solution, you must first understand the struggle.

The existence of class struggle is patent in many departments of life, in factories, in rural areas and in the towns. You will find the tussle going on between the ruling classes sitting on the others and the others trying to get rid of their burdens. That is the class struggle. But in India we have not only the class struggle, but also the national struggle which, in a way, is a racial struggle, because nationalism is allied to racialism in subject countries. So it does not create class struggle. It draws your attention to the existing facts, and after drawing your attention, it tells you how to get rid of them. It aims at a classless society.

Because socialism throws aside the veil, it brings about conscious conflicts. To give a political comparison, we often enough talk of the shooting at the Jallianwala Bagh. The description we often hear about it is not at all correct, because nobody who went there on that fateful day had any idea that he was going to be shot. They went there in their gala attire and then Dyer shot them. They could not escape. It was no deliberate act of courage on their part. It is a different thing when you and I deliberately go to break laws, to receive lathi charges and firing.

Some persons, like the Liberals and others, have stated that we have brought increased suffering to the Indian people, and that we have not brought Swaraj nearer. These are perfectly true statements, but the conclusions that have been drawn from them are futile.

When you are meeting an entrenched power and vested interests, you have to meet that power with power. You cannot meet it with slogans. When therefore you organise yourselves, either peacefully or otherwise, to meet that power, that power entrenches itself still further. It does not allow you any liberties and the stronger you grow, the laws become harsher, repression increases and civil liberties are cut off. In the struggle one must win and the other sustain complete defeat. There can be no partial occupation of a citadel by the two armies seeking to capture it. As the fight becomes closer, the sufferings will be heavy. It is futile to think in terms of capturing power in bits and scraps. Therefore, when the struggle to capture power, political or economic, comes, we have to face all things. There is only one alternative. It is the continuation of the present exploitation. When you are in the field,

there is bound to be conflict, and that conflict must be settled, in order to establish a society based on nonviolence and cooperation. That is the ideal and in the process we have to go through various conflicts. In the process and in the efforts to realise our goal, we should not care for petty things. If we are true socialists we get a sense of elation and a sense of exaltation in our efforts.

In India and in Madras we lose ourselves in the little things of life, we pine for office whether in the Congress or in the corporation or in the council. I hope that a person who understands socialism will never have that feeling. Of course, it is difficult to find a true and real socialist, but in theory at least we can get hold of the true article. The real socialists should never indulge in these petty bickerings and disputes. For myself, I do not wish to curb ambitious people. I wish to meet them. But ambition should be made of sterner stuff. I should like to meet people with ambitions like Napoleon. But I am rather an admirer of Chengiz Khan than of Napoleon, not because of his terrific massacre, but because of the fact that he was of a higher calibre than his contemporaries. I admire him for his tremendous foresight as a military genius. If you want to be ambitious, well, be ambitious for something worthwhile. There are brilliant people in the history of India and in other countries who can be models for you. If we are ambitious about petty things, it not only lowers us in the estimation of other peoples, but in our own estimation.

So far as India is concerned, I do want you to have that perspective before you approach any problem. On the one side we have to face this nationalistic fundamental urge and on the other the economic urge. Economic conditions in the country have forced us to think entirely in terms of socialism. I think that when you seriously think about this, the only solution offered is socialism. The real objective is to find a solution for the unemployment and poverty and the misery existing in the country. We say that socialism offers the best solution. There are brilliant people all over the world, but in spite of their best endeavours they have failed to produce a scheme by which these miseries could be solved. I remember reading some time ago a speech of Mr. Montagu Norman, the Governor of the Bank of England, in whose hands lies the shaping of the currency policy of the country. In an address to businessmen he has admitted his failure to find a solution for the present economic depression, while the socialist has got a plausible explanation of the depression and a method of approach to the solution of the problem. The question is not one of accepting socialism blindly, but one of seeking a way out of the present unsatisfactory conditions. It does not matter how we approach the question, but the

fundamental objective should remain common. The conditions in India are gradually becoming grave, and that is why there is so much talk of socialism now. At the same time, the nationalist urge remains a dominant issue. The problem before us is how best to combine both. I do not want anybody in the country to imagine that we are trying to hide anything. The Congress is a living organisation and it would not represent the nation if it did not represent all the viewpoints. Recognising the conflicts, we have to find common ways of action. We must not do anything to prevent that common action. Although we cannot cooperate on the larger issues, we can cooperate on the issue of anti-imperialism. I believe that in India the obvious common platform is anti-imperialism.

This is the last public engagement during my stay in the city and I would like to express my gratitude to the residents. I have addressed several meetings and think that at least half of the population must have heard me. What is more, I have felt something of the strong enthusiasm of the people and felt strengthened in my work.

15. Trade Unions and the Congress¹

I am glad of the opportunity, before I leave the province, of saying something about the problem of workers, as it is of great and growing importance. In reality the problems of the peasant and the worker, as well as many other problems in India, form part of one and the same problem, viz., poverty and unemployment. These two problems are peculiar problems which cover all—peasant, worker, artisan, merchant, tradesman and almost everybody. How are we to get rid of them? As workers, you know that you cannot get rid of them except by developing your strength and organisation. That is the only way. So your business is one of developing organised strength. A trade union is the organised strength of the workers, the peasant organisation is the organised strength of the peasants and the national movement is the organis-

1. Speech at meeting of railway workers, Tiruchchirappalli, 16 October 1936. From *The Hindu*, 17 October 1936.

ed strength of a subject nation to wrest political power. So, in a sense, the nationalist movement covers the various classes in a country in order to wrest political power so that we can then tackle the question of poverty and unemployment.

It is perfectly true that a workers' organisation has a definite outlook and the nationalist movement's outlook is not quite the same as that of a trade union, or of a peasant organisation, because in the nationalist movement there are other classes also besides the working classes. At the same time a nationalist movement has to establish freedom. That also must necessarily be the objective of the workers; therefore, in regard to the big objective of independence, both the movements should face the same struggle.

The obtaining of Swaraj for India is a common aim for workers as well as the nationalist movement and it is necessary and desirable for the two to cooperate because thereby the workers will really advance their own cause. You may ask me what the Congress is going to do for the workers. It is a great democratic organisation containing all manner of people, with all manner of ideas, but with the one binding link, viz., the desire to obtain the independence of India. I cannot say what the Congress may decide. There are 80 per cent of the population as peasants in the country and quite a large percentage of industrial workers also. The real way to influence the Congress is to come into it. There is also another way of coming into the Congress and it was discussed recently and perhaps something may be done in this matter. It is for the Congress committees to have a closer cooperation with trade unions. The same cooperation there is even today, local, provincial and all-India, but perhaps it may be possible for organised workers to send their representatives to some Congress committees. That is all that has been considered. I do not want to discuss this question, but I want you to remember that it is essential today in India for the workers' movement to throw its full weight with the national movement and in the struggle for independence. If the workers hesitate and do not do so, then it will stifle itself and will not profit by the strong urge for political freedom that is strengthening the country.

In spite of joining and supporting the nationalist movement, trade unions must function as trade unions separately from the Congress. They may cooperate with the Congress on the political side, but they have the workers' demands and must function as unions and fight those battles. Even on those issues they will have a great deal of support from the Congress. It is the function of industrial workers to carry on a trade union, to have new ones and to build up a powerful trade union organisation. Every worker should know that his whole

strength and future depend on the strength of the union. The more strongly a trade union is organised the greater is the protection to the workers. Trade unions are being developed to become a great national federation or organisation. The next step is to become international.

A split in the trade union movement has unfortunately weakened the position of the workers in the country at this time. There is also the question of retrenchment of railway workers. The remedy for it lies in your hands. The great lesson the workers have to learn is that only in their organised strength lies any protection for them. First of all, your own union should be strong. You must get every railway worker to join and there must be unity in your rank and file. So long as there is no unity, you will be weak and your employers will take advantage of this weakness. Hence you should build up a joint and strong united labour movement in India.

You must resist and end the unions sponsored by the employers with a view to weaken the trade union movement. I also condemn communal unions. I cannot imagine a more monstrous aberration. The very basis of the labour movement is unity in regard to work and labour. I wonder what this has to do with religion, caste or creed. If you are railway workers, whatever may be your religion, your job is in the union. These things should be avoided by you and you must try and build up a strong organised labour movement for the whole of India in which should be included all those people who labour not only by their hands but by their brains also. Even now in theory they are included. This great labour movement should fully cooperate with the Indian National Congress on the political platform, completely, so that along with the peasant movement, we may be able to build a joint and impregnable front against British imperialism and carry on the fight for freedom in India and before long achieve independence.

Organised labour stands all over the world for socialism. I take it that you also stand for socialism. You cannot bring in socialism today, because socialism does not come in a subject country. Those who believe in socialism have to spread its ideology and convert others to accept socialism and thus build up and prepare the ground for the future introduction of socialism, for only in socialism will the worker get his own and build up a state and eliminate all exploitation.

16. A Pudukottah Reception¹

One is apt to get a little tired mentally after continuous repetition of the same kind of incidents. Fortunately Pudukottah offered a variety which took us out of the dull rut. As we approached Pudukottah town I saw part of the Pudukottah army lining the road in battle array. I was interested. Further up a larger force of the army occupied the road. I grew more interested. So I got off the car and inquired from someone who might be the head of the police or the field marshal what all this was about and whether there were manoeuvres of the army, or the international situation affected the Pudukottah state, and whether preparations were being made for the coming crisis, or was a riot feared. I was told that the army had turned out merely to clear the way for me so that the crowds might not embarrass me. A very delicate compliment indeed, on the part of the Pudukottah state to the President of the Indian National Congress, to which I was unaccustomed. I have had so far tremendous receptions from all manner of people and crowds. But to be escorted by an army through the streets lined with troops was a Viceregal experience which I had not had. So I thought I had better make the most of it while I had the chance and I decided to march through that part of the territory of this great state. And so we marched along, the Pudukottah army following, while a silent crowd and people stood by. It must have been a pleasant sight to which I was not accustomed. We marched a mile or so when unfortunately, owing to pressure of time, I had to go back to the car. And so I bade good-bye to the Pudukottah army and rushed off away to Trichinopoly.

This incident is full of meaning and shows us how states function and especially those under more or less British administration. For I understand that the ruler of Pudukottah is a minor and the administration is under British control. I was passing through the state at a great pace as I had no time to waste. I would not have stopped at all anywhere but for the state authorities who were full of fear of all manner of happenings, and did the very thing which I could not have done, owing to lack of time, and created a commotion all over the state and drew more attention to my passage than would have otherwise happened.

1. Statement to the press, 16 October 1936. *The Hindu*, 16 October 1936. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 58-60. Jawaharlal passed through Pudukottah, then an Indian state, on 15 October 1936.

So far as I am concerned I welcome this and I am grateful to the state authorities for this military arrangement made to welcome my passage through their territory. I understand that garlanding was specially forbidden by the state as a revolutionary activity which might upset the whole fabric of the administration. Probably the fabric is so flimsy that any breath of wind will blow it away. Hence its excessive nervousness.

17. Farewell Message to Tamil Nadu¹

Men and Women of Tamil Nad,

For two weeks, I have wandered up and down your province and visited many of your famous cities and large numbers of villages. I have addressed hundreds of meetings and vast multitudes of men and women. For these two weeks we have been together and have seen each other, and perhaps we have grown to understand one another a little better.

And now I am going back to the north and as I go, innumerable memories crowd into my mind—memories of surging crowds, and an enthusiasm bordering on frenzy, and shining eyes with unspoken pledges looking through them.

I brought the message of the Congress to you. That message was no new one to you, and yet you demonstrated anew, in your magnificent way, your allegiance to the Congress and to the country's freedom. Individuals come and go, but the cause remains and binds us together in a common unity. Right through this tour of mine, this sense of unity in a great enterprise has been with me, the unity of India trying to break through the divisions and shackles that are our lot today. I forgot that I was in the far south away from my home in the north; only one thing mattered—the independence of India—and we were all comrades struggling shoulder to shoulder to realise this desire of our hearts. The love of India filled us and we looked forward, eagerly and anxiously, to the promise of freedom.

And everywhere with this love of independence was a passion for social freedom, a desire to end the exploitation of our people and establish a juster order which would put an end to the cause of poverty and the vast and growing unemployment which strangles us. The great

1. Given at Madras, 18 October 1936. *The Hindu*, 20 October 1936. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 58-60.

crowds that gathered to hear me were largely naked, poverty-stricken people, hungering for relief from their terrible burdens. And in their minds and ours political freedom and social freedom were mixed together and were two facets of the future we worked for.

But all this wonderful enthusiasm and overpowering affection have to be disciplined and organised lest they waste themselves on trivial objects. The Congress has endeavoured with much success to do this, but we must go further still, and harness this energy and vitality to the cause of the Congress and of India's freedom. For this, the Congress must spread its organisation, just as it has already sent its appeal, to every village and function throughout on a democratic basis. Leadership is essential, but authoritarianism is bad, and already we suffer from it sufficiently under British domination.

In some places there were local disputes chiefly about municipal and district board elections.² Some of them undoubtedly were due to a certain looseness in the choice of Congress candidates. Men were chosen who had little of the Congress spirit in them and subsequently could not play the great game and even occasionally broke their pledges. That way lies danger. Our strength will lessen and our ideals fade if we lower down our quality in search for quantity. Therefore we may not lower our ideals whatever happens.

Women came to our meetings in surprising numbers and it was clear that they were also to some extent politically awake. I was glad to see this awakening amongst them for women must play their full part in this national and social struggle.

Big problems face us. We must grow big enough to solve them and we may not allow the trivial or secondary to take the first place in our minds.

I must express very deep gratitude to you for the affection showered upon me. Yet that was for the Congress, for I came as the Congress President, the bearer of the Congress message. Remember that message and remember also that true enthusiasm leads to activity, joint disciplined activity under the Congress flag, and in furtherance of the Congress aim.

I go back now, but I shall long remember this visit and I shall take the message of our comrades in the Tamil Nad to other parts and other people.

2. Jawaharlal had refused to accept an address of welcome from the Tiruchirappalli municipality as some of its Congress members including the chairman had opposed the official Congress candidates in the municipal elections and the chairman had refused to resign in spite of the Congress directive.

18. Impressions of Andhra Tour¹

Three days in the Andhra districts are hardly sufficient to enable one to say much. But even these three days have shown to me that here, as in Tamil Nad, there is tremendous enthusiasm amongst the people for the Congress.

In Tamil Nad, I had noticed considerable sympathy with socialistic ideas, often expressed in addresses presented to me. Here in Andhra Desa this is still more noticeable. The peasantry as well as the young people have expressed themselves very definitely in favour of these socialist ideas. I am not sure whether these ideas are rightly understood by many of them. Still all this shows a tremendous ferment in the people. I was also glad to notice peasants' organisations in Andhra Desa, which appear to be doing good work for the peasants. Such peasant organisations are helpful, not only to agitate for the removal of peasant grievances but to help in the larger cause of Swaraj. I hope there will be the fullest cooperation between these ryots' associations and the Congress committees.

In Guntur the over-enthusiasm of some young socialist produced a small incident which was in itself insignificant, but it might have created some misapprehension in the minds of those present.² That incident was clearly due to his over-enthusiasm and I am sure that it did not mean anything more than that socialists must bear in mind that they have to convert others to their viewpoint. It is no service to socialism to irritate people by a stress at the wrong moment. However, that little incident has passed off and I hope there will be the fullest cooperation between all.

I understand that a regular campaign has been launched by the provincial government against socialist workers and that proceedings are being taken against some of them apparently with a desire to suppress the spread of socialist ideas. Such ideas cannot of course be suppressed in this way, but it is important that all Congressmen should realise that this kind of suppression of one group or one set of ideas is inevitably followed by an attempt to suppress other groups and

1. Interview to the press, Vijayawada, 20 October 1936. *The Hindu*, 21 October 1936.

2. On 19 October at Guntur a young man claiming to be a socialist had interrupted Jawaharlal's speech at a public meeting.

other ideas also. Therefore, we must hold together and object to all such suppression of individuals and ideas from the point of view of civil liberty and the cause of national freedom.

I am sorry that I have been able to spend only three days in Andhra Desa. The region attracts me as I feel there is very fine material and very fine enthusiasm. I wish I could stay here longer but that cannot be done now. My good wishes to all our comrades and workers in the Andhra areas. I trust that they will sink their petty differences and hold on to the high ideals of the Congress. If they do so, all opposition to them will be of little avail.

19. Observance of Anti-War Day¹

The Lucknow Congress passed a resolution drawing the country's attention to the war danger and laying down the general lines of the policy to be followed in regard to it. Ever since then that danger has come nearer, the clouds darken the horizon, and bloody and terrible war hangs in the balance. Already one can hear the tramp of armed men in Europe and vast fleets of aeroplanes and bombers take to the sky. Feverishly every government prepares for the war that seems inevitable. We may not forget this dominant and overwhelming fact of the world, of far greater importance to our future than the constitution Act and elections that absorb so much of our attention. Our future and the future of the world are wrapped up in it; we forget this at our peril.

It has been the custom in many countries to observe anti-war days. In our own country anti-war days have been observed in the past at the instance of some provincial Congress committees as well as the Congress Socialist Party. But the urgency and vital importance of the matter demand a greater interest and a wider observance, so that we may not forget. I suggest therefore that November 11th, the Armistice Day, be observed as an anti-war day throughout the country and meetings be held in the evening. At these meetings the resolution of the Lucknow Congress on war danger should be read out and adopted.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 29 October 1936. *The Tribune*, 31 October 1936.

20. To N. G. Ranga¹

31.10.1936

Dear Ranga,²

Thank you for your letter of the 23rd October. My three days in Andhra gave me a definite feeling that the Andhra peasants were awake and class conscious. I suppose partly at least this must be credited to the work you and your colleagues have been doing among the peasantry.

As to what you say about the Congress Working Committee and the Parliamentary Committee, I cannot write much because that would involve a lengthy argument.³ But I should like you to realise, as I do, that socialism cannot be built up in this country by manoeuvres at the top and capturing committees. It must have a more solid foundation. I am much more concerned with this solid foundation than having socialists in this or that committee. Secondly, that socialists have still to convert large numbers of the middle but advanced elements in the Congress. They are good material if properly approached but I find that often enough there is no proper approach to them. They are only irritated.

It is difficult for me to issue appeals on behalf of particular journals as you suggest.⁴ So far I have not done so.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5(KW)(i)/1936, p. 183, N.M.M.L.
2. (b. 1900); founder president of the Bharat Kisan Sammelan, 1935; member, Lok Sabha, 1957-70; resigned from the Congress in 1959 and joined the Swatantra Party; later became its president; rejoined the Congress in 1972; author of several books including *Peasants and Communism* and *Towards World Peace*.
3. In his letter of 23 October 1936, Ranga had regretted that Jawaharlal had not nominated more socialists to the Working Committee and the All India Parliamentary Committee.
4. Ranga had requested Jawaharlal to make an appeal for financial help for the Telugu journal, *Vahini*, so that security could be paid to the government.

21. The Congress and the World Crisis¹

I do not know in what capacity you welcomed me this morning when I arrived in this great city of Calcutta. That magnificent and overwhelming welcome and that demonstration of overwhelming affection—I wonder in what capacity I received them. I know of course that you have a habit of showering love on your people whom you happen to like and that when you give your love, you give it in an abundant measure. But still I wonder in what capacity you gave me this welcome. I happen to be the President of the Indian National Congress today. The Indian National Congress is something of which you, I and all of us are proud and which we honour. And it is right you should show honour to one who happens to be its President however personally lacking he might be in the noble qualities befitting that position. I represent for the moment the Indian National Congress. This Congress of ours has become a unique party in this country.

It is a great and powerful organisation and if I come and speak to you as its President, I speak with the authority and dignity of the Congress. I do not speak in a humble way because I represent a great and powerful organisation which has become the mirror of India's desires, sufferings and urges and has become the symbol of India's will to freedom. I am proud to belong to this organisation. I am proud of my colleagues in this organisation, innumerable men and women who have fought shoulder to shoulder for the past many years. If I come to you and speak to you as the President of the Congress, I also come to you in my personal capacity as one of your old comrades, as one who has shared with you your joys and your sufferings; and I should like, human as I am, that you took me more as one of your comrades than as the President of the Indian National Congress.

I feel that in considering our problems in this country we are often apt to forget the fundamental background of these problems. We are apt to forget the tremendous world problems that are overshadowing the world horizon. Now if we think that we happen to live in a world which is not changing rapidly, in a world which is more or less static, in a world where we can think of the minor affairs or secondary problems, then it is a different matter. But when there is a catastrophe waiting for

1. Speech at public meeting, Calcutta, 5 November 1936. From *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 6 November 1936.

us, then it becomes a little foolish on our part to think in terms of minor or secondary matters. A great man said two or three years ago that in the history of the world there never had been such a revolutionary period as it exists today, as it has existed since the end of the last Great War. We cannot escape the force of world events. We have got to be ready to face them so that we can either avert them or profit by them.

This is the fundamental factor of the Indian situation as it is of the international situation. It may be a surprise to you to know that today my mind thinks more of the Spanish problem, of the horrors that are going on in Spain, than of many ordinary problems in relation to India. I am obsessed with this Spanish affair. Why? Not because I am greatly concerned with the fate of an individual Spaniard, not because of the fate of Spain hanging in the balance, but only because wrapped up with the fate of Spain is the fate of Europe, and wrapped up with the fate of Europe is the fate of the world. I think of the possible consequences of all this. I see the tremendous growth of fascism, the triumphant growth of fascism. But because it is triumphant today we are not going to submit to it. It is a thing which we shall fight to the utmost, whatever may happen.

I look with grave apprehension at the triumphant growth of fascism in certain countries in Europe. When I see certain other European countries more or less democratic falling a prey to this fascism or a country like England flirting with it, apparently combating it, or like France following a weak, vacillating policy, I fear for the future of Europe. I fear because I cannot conceive that fascism will ultimately triumph in Europe because fascism is built on foundations of sand.

The real issue in the world today is the possibility of this great catastrophe that seems to approach us so rapidly. And it is approaching very rapidly. It may come in two years, three years; it is not possible to extend the period beyond that. That ought to be a long enough period, psychologically and practically, to get prepared for it. I hold certain views rather strongly in regard to politics, in regard to economics, in regard to social matters. And I gave expression to those views at the Lucknow Congress. But I feel that, in view of the world crisis that threatens to overtake us, I would not be justified in weakening the Indian National Congress through which alone we can hope to face the crisis effectively. We cannot face the approaching world crisis individually. We cannot face it through our little, petty groups here and there.

The Indian problem is fundamentally a problem of India's poverty

and unemployment. Everything else stems from it. I am prepared to base my whole case on India's poverty and the growing unemployment in the country. We are today having a progressive deterioration of human material in India. It is a terrible thing. Bengal has protested and protested rightly against the detention for an indefinite period of thousands of persons. And the real injury caused to Bengal thereby is the intellectual deterioration of her people. The problems before us are problems of poverty and unemployment. And it is because we seek to remedy them that we think of Swaraj. After all, we can postpone political Swaraj for some time, but when economic conditions become critical, when hunger affects millions and millions, we cannot postpone the issue, we have got to procure food for the hungry and employment for the unemployed.

The Congress has decided to contest the coming elections and I think that, in view of the present situation in the country, we have no alternative but to contest the elections. But I would like the audience to remember this, that so far as the new Act is concerned, the whole attitude of the Congress is one of intensive dislike and desire to put an end to it as soon as possible. It is the desire of the Congress not to co-operate in the slightest way with this Act. Still we have decided to contest these elections. There is no inconsistency in this except so far as that in contesting these elections, possibly we may gradually slide down the scale and go in for a measure of cooperation. There is that danger. Let us face it. And what is the position in the country today? There are two groups of forces. One may be called the left-wing and the other the right-wing, inasmuch as one is for some measure of cooperation while the other is totally against any cooperation with government. It is a conflict of ideas. This conflict of ideas we see in the Congress itself. After all, the Congress represents the nation and therefore the Congress represents this conflict of ideas of the nation also. In politics, however extreme one may be, it is quite absurd to talk of doing the same thing always, to take an attitude of uncompromising hostility always. We have got to decide policies in regard to certain circumstances.

Now the Congress has accepted this position of running candidates for the elections. But I would remind you that the Congress has made it perfectly clear in the election manifesto that it wants to go to the councils to break the constitution. Although the whole question of the elections may not be a great issue when we think in terms of bigger problems, we must put all our strength in it, now that we have decided to contest the elections. When I ask you to go to the legislatures, I ask you to send those people who will fight there. This is a matter

which I want you to remember. This is a matter of the most vital importance. It is essential that Congress candidates must be men who are real Congressmen, not in the sense of four-anna members, but men whose past records show that they can stand up to fight for freedom, whatever may happen. I want you to remember that Congress candidates, who will go to the legislatures, will go there not in their individual capacity but only as standard-bearers of certain policies which the Congress has adopted. If you support those policies adopted by the Congress, it becomes your duty to support the Congress candidates; you cannot support anybody else. The ultimate contest is between the Congress and the various forces ranged round the government. When I speak of Congress candidates, I do not recognise any communal group. I mean Congressmen—Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and everybody. The other day I saw in the papers that Mr. Jinnah said that the Muslim League candidates “may” cooperate with the Congress in the legislatures. I thank Mr. Jinnah for the offer. But I do not want “mays” and “buts”. I want fighters. So far as we are concerned, we rely on Congressmen alone—Congress Hindus, Congress Muslims or Congress Sikhs. So far as our fight for freedom is concerned, it is going to be carried on by the Indian National Congress and the Indian National Congress alone. We are not going to rely on any communal group, however liberal they may seem.

The issue of the Communal Award has been boomed up a lot in the press. I do not deny that it is an important issue. I do not deny that it is an issue which affects a large number of people and that we must give our earnest consideration to it. But I would like to submit to you that even in considering the issue you must not lose sight of the bigger issues of the country in relation to the international and domestic situations. There are few people in this country who like that Award. Anyone who stands by independence and democracy cannot like that Award. So far as the Congress is concerned, it has expressed its opinion about it in the strongest possible terms. And when occasion comes the Congress will not fail to show what it feels about it. But let us not put this issue in the forefront of all our problems, thus diverting the attention of the masses from the real problems of the country. I have found during my wanderings in different parts of India that many Muslim groups who work amongst the middle class and the peasantry are coming to the conclusion that this Communal Award is not going to do any good to them but would, on the contrary, prove ultimately injurious to their interests. And they would be glad to welcome an opportunity to get out of this tangle. I would make an appeal to them to consider the Communal Award in relation to bigger problems. I do not want them to put this

in the forefront because if they want to put it in the forefront, they forget the international issue and the issues of poverty and unemployment. The only possible way of arriving at a solution of this communal problem is through the cooperation of various groups. I do not like you to understand by this that the Congress expects all the big communal leaders of the Muslim League and of the Hindu Mahasabha to cooperate in this matter and embrace one another. This is not likely to happen. If we can gain a substantial support from various groups, then there is the possibility of our solving the problem. If we keep this in mind then we will be able to put an end to the Communal Award. But if we make it a primary issue, then we do a very great wrong to the political movement and divert the attention of the masses from the bigger issues.

22. Poverty and 'Culture'¹

After all, we belong to a passing generation. We have had our day. Sooner or later we shall pass on. We have laboured hard for the dawn, we have worked and struggled through a continuous night. Many of us with whom we have worked shoulder to shoulder during the past many years have left. Many of us, left behind, may not live to see that dawn. But the dawn will come.

And those left behind have got to keep up that torch to brighten at least the path along which we have got to go. That torch has got to be kept up. And I want to know how many hands there are amongst you, strong arms that will keep that torch up?

During the last twenty years we have passed through many crises, made sacrifices, gone through many sufferings. You may say that we have not been able to deliver the goods. But, on the whole, we have done fairly well. There are other ways of measuring success. There are psychological values which are much more important than those other things. These twenty years have not been years of which India could be ashamed. We have enough to be proud of. We have shown enough courage, discipline and sacrifice for a great cause in this country. If we have not

1. Address to students, Calcutta, 6 November 1936. From *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 7 November 1936.

succeeded in attaining freedom, what of that? That does not mean that all these years have been useless. However, these are things of the past. At any rate we can and we will hold up the torch as we have done in the past. But what of the future? When that time comes when the torch of freedom has got to be handed to you, young men and young women, what will you do? I want an answer to these questions from you. I have had enough of fine words. I have not come here to get praises from you. What is that talk of sacrifice and services? Enough I have had of it. Are you prepared yourselves for that trial?

You talk of cultural cooperation. Cultural cooperation? I do not understand it. We have had enough of brave words. You talk of cultural cooperation when there is such terrible misery all around you. Where is the culture in this country? There is terrible poverty in this country and you talk of culture. It is mockery, I tell you. I believe in culture. And I want culture to spread to millions, not the culture of the few on the top. Are you going to build up that culture on the miserableness of Indian humanity? That is not culture. We have had a fine and great and ancient record of culture but the root soon dried up. Why? Because it became confined more and more to the superficial strata, because it did not draw inspiration from the masses in the country.

You have couched your address in fine and flowery language. We have had enough of it. There is a controversy in certain parts of India now as to Hindi or Urdu becoming the national language. Hindi is a language in relation to the vast numbers of people that speak it. But it cannot become a world language until it becomes a language of the masses, until it goes to the masses, talks the language of the masses, thinks their thoughts and their problems. How is it that a change has come about in your Bengali language? It is because you had a number of artists who have brought about this change. They are in touch with the masses and know the language of the masses. Beauty comes from simplicity of language, not from cumbrous and high-sounding words showing learning. That is not the beauty of language. Beauty of language comes from grace and simplicity. If you think in terms of culture, if you think in terms of language, go to the masses that are behind you. Unless you can raise them, unless you identify yourselves with them, there is no use talking of your culture and your language.

The problem is how you can raise these poverty-stricken masses in India. How can you put an end to this terrible unemployment that has already laid us low, caused enormous sufferings and degradation to our

peasants and our working masses and is just now attacking our middle-class young men and women. It is like a creeping paralysis. If you go to a person who is suffering from paralysis and talk to him about culture, what will it avail? You will have to talk to him about his disease and its remedy. When a man is hungry, what is the use of talking to him about culture? Think in terms of reality. Do not lose yourselves in words and phrases. I beg of you, in your organisations, in your associations, to grapple, theoretically at any rate, practically when you get the chance for it, with the problems in all seriousness; do not treat them as light things. Do not play with them as a mimic game of politics.

I do not talk in terms of self-sacrifice. Enough of self-sacrifice. I want you to become ambitious men, not men with petty, ignoble ambition but men with ambition of doing brave deeds, of raising our country to a higher level, of joining the great game of life, of making life something which will ennoble you and ennoble our people. If you live life as life should be lived, you will find that there is something greater than the ordinary comforts and petty amenities of life. That is life, life rich in experience, rich in the higher sensations of life.

Do not talk of my service and sacrifices. I have done it because there is joy in it. Do you think that I could turn back from this kind of life and go back to my old profession of law? How foolish, how silly it is to talk of my sacrifices. I lead this life because I find joy in this.

23. Capitalism, Imperialism and Socialism¹

Although I talk a great deal of socialism and bring it into most of my addresses some way or other, I do not usually deal with the fine points of the doctrine. I would however warn you that you should not expect from me a very learned and scientific discourse on socialism. I have tried to understand the doctrine of socialism by reading a fair amount of theory. It appealed to me and I have gradually grown into it. I have grown into it to a large extent and I am still growing.

1. Address to Congress Socialists, Calcutta, 7 November 1936. From *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 8 November 1936.

And I do not know that even now I can call myself in any sense a dogmatic socialist because what appeals to me in socialism is that there can be no dogma about it.

You know that the whole conception of modern socialism is something fairly new. Old socialism was mere humanitarianism, a mere utopian idea of justice and equality, of doing away with poverty and the rest of it. That idea of course is as old as the world. It came more into prominence in the early days of industrial revolution. But what is called modern or scientific socialism is Marxism. When we talk of socialism, it is essentially Marxism we speak of. Essentially it is based on certain scientific methods of trying to understand history, trying to understand from past events the laws that govern the development of human society and, having understood those laws, trying to understand the present with the help of those laws, and also the future how dimly it may be. But the fact that Marx was a great genius in his line does not necessarily mean that the laws he derived are fundamental laws which we cannot challenge. As a socialist I must challenge anything unless I understand it. We should approach a subject with a desire to understand it.

Many people get very worried about the issue of class struggle and seem to think that this is preaching class hatred and enmity. The whole conception of class struggle is that the world today, as in the past, is based on the conflict of classes, dominance of a certain class over the others. If this is a fact we must recognise it. It is astounding that anybody denies it. To recognise this fact and then to try to get rid of it is not promoting enmity and hatred. Socialism aims at the abolition of class struggle by the abolition of classes and having one class.

Today the whole of the social fabric is based on violence, conflict, cut-throat competition and it develops all the evil qualities which go with these things. And when people come to us and talk to us not to disturb the present structure for fear that such activities on their part may be resented by this or that man, it means that these people are in favour of perpetuating this violence, hatred and enmity which the present system breeds. Socialism means that there should not be such enmity, such hatred and such violence. The only alternative is our submission to, and acceptance of, the present order. The whole of Marx's analysis shows how society changes as it goes on developing. What Marx showed was that the economic factor was the most important factor. The control of the means of production gave them control over the life of the community. Thus in the days when the principal means of production was the land, the landlords were the dominant class. That was the feudal period. Naturally with the coming of the industrial revolution, the landlord class sank into the background in Western

countries. Land is still an important means of production but there are also other means of it.

Capitalism today is in a tremendous process of decay. It is not a question of our going about cursing this individual capitalist or that for having money. This idea of cursing capitalists or landlords individually has nothing to do with our idea of understanding what capitalism is. When we attack capitalism, what do we attack?

Capitalism came a hundred years ago in its modern form and did a tremendous lot of work by its methods of production, increased the standard of living and wealth. Unfortunately in India we profited very little by it. But taking the world as a whole, capitalism increased the wealth of the world tremendously. It increased the food of the world, it increased the standard of the world a great deal. We must not simply think that capitalism has always been bad. But it has served its purpose, it does not any more fulfil a purpose. The good points of capitalism should be retained but fitted to a new structure so that it may give society the benefit of the new methods. The problem of production of wealth was solved by capitalism but not the problem of distribution of wealth. Socialism is the only analysis which helps us understand what is happening, as to why there is this accumulation of wealth on one side and extreme poverty on the other, why we have international conflict and what is this new type of imperialism. This is connected with the modern growth of imperialism, with the demands of raw materials and a demand for markets. When we talk of anti-imperialism, most of us think it is against England. We must understand that imperialism is something vaster and entirely different from England, France or any other country. There is English imperialism, French imperialism, Japanese imperialism. Essentially they are the same type of thing. But though of the same type they often come into conflict with each other. At first they tried to divide the world. They tried to find markets for raw materials and then they came into conflict with each other. Capitalism is fundamentally based on not only continuous domestic conflict, but international conflict on such a big scale that the next war may end in the destruction of the very great civilisation that Europe has built up in the past several years. What is happening in Spain may happen all over the world. All this is the inevitable fruit of the present system of capitalism in the world.

So far as we in India are concerned, we are in a peculiar position and this peculiar position is due largely to the coming of the British here some 150 or more years ago. Their coming also brought various influences from the West. Capitalism in India is still not fully grown. It may be said to be in its infancy in India. But capitalism itself is a world

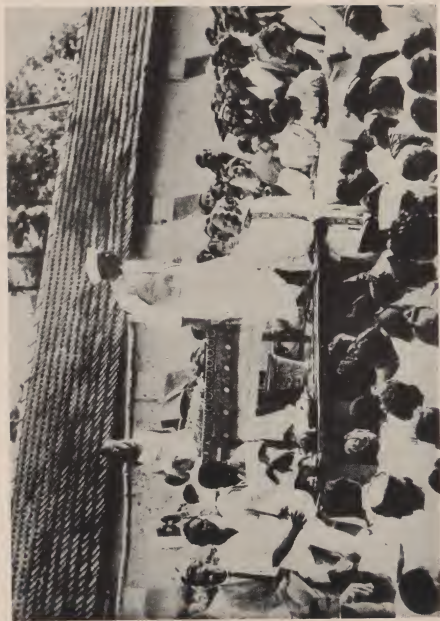
phenomenon. We cannot separate capitalism of one country from another. Therefore if capitalism decays in America and Europe, it cannot obviously carry on in India. On the other hand, there is the tremendous problem of poverty and unemployment which cannot be solved without a widespread system of planning, development of industries big and small, development of social services, development of agriculture, entire change of the system of land laws and so on and so forth. We require this enormous system of planning and only socialism can provide it. How can socialism come to this country? Obviously neither socialism nor anything can come to this country so long as British imperialism remains in this country. So this question of Swaraj arises, which is removal of British imperialism from this country and the placing of power in the hands of the Indian masses. Power placed in the hands of the people at the top will not bring socialism nor will it solve the problems of India. Therefore this fight for Swaraj becomes essential for everybody, for socialists certainly and for everybody else who wants freedom except those who may be interested in the continuation of British imperialism.

It is perfectly true that the actual working of the socialist state cannot be introduced in India till after we are independent, and even then it will probably take some time. We cannot make a country socialist by passing laws. Laws are necessary to make the path clear. But we have to build up the state. The mere passing of laws will not bring socialism. We will have to build up society. If we want socialism, we will have to build up human beings. It is ultimately a question of education of the whole generation. The ultimate goal is far. We cannot get it suddenly. But still we cannot separate it from the idea of independence.

I do not think that we can win Swaraj in India without the effective help of the masses of the country. In a fight for Swaraj the socialist approach to the masses is important. One of the things that attracts me towards socialism is its freedom from dogma. I find to my horror that some people go about and talk of socialism in terms of phrases and slogans. I think this is the best way of running down socialism. They forget that when they use those phrases they do not convey any idea to the masses. We are required to speak in the language of the Indian peasants, Indian labourers, Indian working classes and not in the language which is totally foreign to them, not in slogans which are not understandable by them.



RECEPTION AT MADRAS, OCTOBER 1936



AT COKULAM ASHRAMAM, MADRAS, OCTOBER 1936

24. Municipalisation and Socialism¹

I express my gratefulness to the Calcutta Corporation for the welcome accorded to me. I can hardly forget the magnificent reception that thousands and thousands of Calcutta citizens gave me five days ago. Although the expressions of love in your address are couched in personal language, it is meant more for the office that I hold and the great organisation I represent. I appreciate it not only on my own behalf but also on behalf of that great organisation.

I go about in the country like a pilgrim who seldom rests anywhere. I wander about in quest of something which is not entirely clear in my mind. I am not referring for the moment to the objective we have in view, the freedom of India. That is clear enough. I wander about and address huge crowds trying to carry the message of the Congress to them. Sometimes doubts assail me whether I reach the mind of the people, but still I carry on, not because I have a passion for discomfort or a passion for self-sacrifice but because of the unease which is in my mind. It is my mind that troubles me. The sights that I see around me during my wanderings, the sights of misery and unhappiness, trouble me. So it becomes difficult for me to rest even though I may seek that rest. You know we have to carry on till we reach our goal. And often I feel a certain measure of dissatisfaction at the inactive character of much of the work that we do, of the destructive character of our work. And I envy you who are in charge of the great city and who are doing a great deal of constructive work for the city. It is an enviable work.

Under the present circumstances it is not a very happy task even to try to do constructive work, the work of raising the standard of living of a very large number of people. You face a great deal of difficulty from the government, from vested interests and the like. You have large ideas; you have large visions. But you see that vested interests do come in our way whether we function as municipal commissioners or otherwise. Therefore, if I think about it, I do not envy you very much. But after all, you are working for a great city. And I must confess that I have a love for large cities. I love the village in a way but I hate to live in villages. But I do not like the present large cities either.

1. Reply to the Calcutta Corporation address, 9 November 1936. From *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 10 November 1936.

After all, it is the city which is a fine sphere of culture and civilisation. I want to take the cultural advantages of the city. I like to take many of the cultural advantages that the city life provides and I like some of the things which the village stands for. I like the city to approach the village and the village to approach the city. So I like this idea of trying to look after great cities, trying to raise their level, of making them beautiful cities, not only with beautiful buildings, but with healthy, efficient human beings, or loving people, cooperating with each other and not trying to knock each other down and exploit each other and make each other miserable. That is the ideal of the great city that I should like to have and I like to work for. I love to extend this beauty to the village. I love to have the city beautiful, the country beautiful, the world beautiful, so that our people in future might have a glimpse of a world where they will have cooperation, a sense of service for the common good, goodwill and love for each other and not violence, hatred, exploitation and misery. So I love this work—this constructive work which you do. But I do not think that all that we do is sheer work of destruction. Our work may not bring the results that it ought to bring. Sometimes the results are terribly disheartening.

It inevitably comes to this that it is better to remove these obstructions that come in our way. And therefore many of us have for the moment, almost against our will, almost against the urges that are within us, devoted ourselves to this work of destruction, of agitation, of breaking down, so that we may have a clean slate to write on and a clean field to build on.

Just consider how much we have got to do in India whether in cities or in villages, where thousands and thousands of our people live—people who are living emblems of poverty and misery in India. It frightens me and yet it encourages me. Many of us feel that we must carry on in this way because it is the only way possible at the present moment under the present circumstances. I take it you, who are engaged not in this work of destruction but in some constructive phases of life, you also feel that there is something in this effort of destruction, because you yourselves will then find a greater advantage in building up anew. But I do feel and feel very strongly that in India today there are many, many things to be done. And there is one thing which is far and above others. There is one outstanding fact which we cannot ignore. It is the bounden duty of us to see that the difficulties in our way are removed—the obstructions which prevent our intellectual growth, our spiritual growth, our moral growth and our economic growth. And the first step to that is knocking down of imperialism. We have to put an end to the poverty of this country. I am aware I do not know much.

But still I should like to put before you that when I go to a great city and find great palatial buildings there, I always form my opinion of the city not from the palaces, but I form my opinion of the city from things that are happening behind these palaces—the mud-huts in which are living thousands of people, living in misery and unhappiness, missing education, sanitation, hygiene, cultural development, parks, libraries and so many other things for which the municipality is set up and so many other things. This is undoubtedly the look-out of the municipality. An efficient municipality is also ultimately responsible for the housing of the population. A municipality is also responsible for their maintenance and if there is no work for the people to do, it is its duty to provide them with employment.

A poor man, a starving man, is a disgrace to a municipality. It is not good for the municipality to say that we have no money to do this or to do that. I think it is the essential function of a municipality to see that there is no unemployment. If you cannot fulfil this function, it must be understood that something is wrong either in the municipality or in the social structure under which it functions. But it is absurd for me to blame the Calcutta Corporation for this. Today it is a vast problem and the problem is not within its control. But the modern ideal of a municipality is that there should be no unemployment, that there should be no unhealthy human beings in the city. A municipality should build up educated and useful citizens who can do a great measure of real work. If that is the idea of a municipality how very far we are from it. Whatever you may try to do, you are up against British imperialism, you are up against vested interests. You are up against a certain social structure which prevents our proper growth, our municipal growth. The idea of municipalisation is the idea of seeing private properties being utilised for the work of the public. That is not socialism. That is sheer development of the municipality. My comparing this idea of municipalisation to socialism you may consider absurd. But the idea is there. And this idea takes us inevitably to other ideas.

I do not know if you think in terms as to what Calcutta should be like twenty or thirty years hence. Do you think of what would be your problems a generation hence? Do not limit your vision. You must think of things ahead and think of the future. You, as a municipality, must set an example to the vested interests that employees should be treated as human beings, that they should not be exploited. I trust this corporation representing this great city will always think in terms of its large number of employees who, after all, are citizens of Calcutta and will not treat them merely as persons to be exploited.

It is pleasant for me to go out of the way of politics, and talk of other matters. I am too much engaged in politics and yet I like to deal with other matters. After all, I do not think I am a politician. It is sheer chance that made me a politician. But still, I do like to come out of the maze of politics and think of other matters. And therefore it is pleasant to me to talk of some other matters and I am thankful to you for giving me this opportunity to speak on such matters. I have come to Calcutta after three years. Today I am going away. I may come back very soon or I may not come for a long time. But whether I come back soon or late I shall remember and remember well the extreme marks of affection which the people of Calcutta have showered upon me.

25. The Need for a Larger Perspective¹

Everywhere when I go to meetings of students, I find a large measure of enthusiasm, but not very much of concentrated thought and clear ideas behind that enthusiasm. And I always have that feeling that enthusiasm takes the place of thought and action. That would be a misuse of that enthusiasm, that would be a negation of that enthusiasm, because right enthusiasm must lead to right action just as right thought must lead to right action.

Whenever I address students I draw their attention usually to certain wider aspects and wider problems to enable them to think, hoping that by thinking they would be able to learn to think in larger perspective and that would lead them to action. You talk of Indian freedom being the whole of your politics and half your religion. I do not quite know that the other half of your religion leads you to slavery. I want you to consider and think of these problems of Indian freedom from many viewpoints.

Today we Indians are oppressed by the might of British imperialism. We have long been oppressed and we have a feeling of suffocation and many people seem to think that the organised might of British imperialism is such that it would be difficult to get out of its clutches.

1. Address to students, Calcutta, 9 November 1936. From *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 10 November 1936.

Many people—I am not talking of students at the present moment—intelligent and educated people, think almost in terms of the British Empire being good for us and certainly not death for us. There are Indians who argue that independence is not good for this country, that something which is not independence is better for the country. That is a remarkable state of mind which not only puzzles me but astonishes me. You may go to a country like Afghanistan which is very backward, but you will not come across a man who will not immediately understand the conception of national freedom. He has repeatedly fought for it and because of that, it has been impossible for the British Empire, in spite of its armies, fighting machines, to bring Afghanistan within its fold.

The people of Afghanistan understand the conception of freedom and they value it and fight for it. But here in this country, we find even some of our highly educated friends getting very irritated if you talk of independence. I am not talking naturally of people within the Congress, because the Congress stands for independence, but there are other people whom I mean. That is a curious mentality which a person develops, who cannot understand even the simplest of ideas. And that shows that sometimes education may be a wrong education and intelligence a perverted intelligence, because the conception of freedom is the simplest possible conception. It is a conception which any man can easily understand. Why is it then that some people who are educated and intelligent fail to understand it and feel so irritated and even suggest to us, people of the Congress, that they are willing to cooperate with us if we give up the idea of independence? Astounding indeed. For the very thing for which India has suffered, for the very thing for which scores of people have gone through the trial of sufferings, we have to give up that very thing because a dozen people want it. It is an astounding proposition. I try to think how this idea has developed and I can see long continued subjection, long continued domination of another country, has a peculiarly corroding effect on people's minds. It has a corroding effect on our political and social life, but it has the worst effect on the mind and spirit of a man. We suffer from it to a great extent.

The most remarkable instance of this effect on certain of our friends is that they live in this vague atmosphere, which is far removed from any conception of freedom. Why is that so? It is simply because long continued subjection has that effect. But still why cannot they take a longer view of things?

The British Empire has been here for the last hundred and fifty years or more, but a hundred and fifty years in a nation's history is not a terribly long period. Hundred and fifty years in India's history is what may

be called a flea-bite. We seem to think, how can we, weak persons, how can we, unorganised persons, stand up against the enormously powerful imperialist machine? But look at the long stretch of Indian history. A few months back I was near the north western frontier of India in the Indus Valley, Sind. I visited Mohenjo-daro, the ruins of that great city, which existed in India five or six thousand years ago.² I had previously been there. During this visit I was on a political tour. But I could not resist the temptation of visiting Mohenjo-daro, because I liked to see the remains of so many years ago. It gave me a truer perspective of the events and things of Indian history and India itself. As I saw the ruins of glory of that magnificent city, the thought came to me of the high standard of culture which existed six thousand years ago and I thought there must have been many thousand years of gradual development which preceded that. And then I thought of the subsequent history of India during these six thousand years, of many ups and downs, of many glories and of many things of which we are ashamed. Then I came to the British rule of 150 years.

But looking at that with the long perspective, I considered other factors too, historical, economic and other factors, which brought about this change in the world and in India. I saw those factors as working towards the end of the British Empire, towards weakening the strong pillars built up by England during the last century. All these things taken together gave me a truer perspective of what is happening in the world and what did happen and is happening in India. I was not oppressed so much because of the British Empire, in spite of its present pressure of oppression and suppression, because I felt that it was a passing phenomenon which would not last for long. I ask you to review the history of India in that way. Some momentary irritations, some domestic troubles, sometimes oppress us terribly, although they are not important. For the moment they become terribly important for us, but they pass away a week or two after. For a moment this trouble has come to us in the shape of British imperialism. It now seems to be permanent, but if we have eyes to see, we can see that it is gradually fading out of the world. But for the time it will function aggressively.

British imperialism is a thing not so much of today, but almost of yesterday. We have dealt with the past, now let us have a peep into the future. I see a terrible future, at any rate an immediate future. I hope that the ultimate future will be better, but I do see terrible

2. The archaeological excavations conducted at Mohenjo-daro in Sind, Harappa in the Punjab and in some other sites during 1922 had brought to light the flourishing of a great civilisation in the third millennium B.C.

conflicts and violence in the immediate future. I see this conflict of enormous forces which might bring about the destruction of a great deal of what you and I hold dear in this country, and in terms of the world.

As young men, as students, I want you to think in terms of India, in terms of India's troubles and India's freedom. We are born in India, we have to function in India. And therefore our first job must be to work for the freedom of India. But I do not want you to limit your thoughts to India, although your activities may be largely limited to India. You must try to think in terms of the world. Nationalism is not wholly good enough. It is a restricted creed, a narrow creed. For India today it is an uplifting creed; but nationalism has dangerous aspects in it. Ultimately what it is, it is anti-ism, anti-foreign, anti-English and so on. In a country like India it is an uplifting creed today, because we work for the freedom of India; then nationalism is right. But this nationalism in Germany is a crushing thing, not an ennobling thing, it is a narrow thing, it is an aggressive thing which threatens the freedom of others.

I want you to think more in terms of something wider than nationalism. Otherwise when freedom comes to India, we shall remain narrow and limited and we shall not take part in the great freedom movement of the world. Having gained freedom, we may forget that there is such a thing as human freedom, economic freedom. Take yourself a little outside this narrow ambit of nationalism and think of the world. View the world forces that are at work today. India today is not and never can be a separate unit from the world. It grows and grows more as a part of the international scheme of things. If you come to the world which is in touch with each other, you see they are tremendously inter-related, so far as trade, commerce, science and culture are concerned.

There is a thing like national culture. A nation has a culture. But even that national culture is getting tremendously influenced by international factors. Today books and ideas and conditions of living are becoming more or less like each other. Europe is terribly international in commerce and trade, yet there is such intense, aggressive nationalism in Europe and America with the result that trade suffers, commerce suffers and conflict comes and war comes. Keep in view the larger perspective of history, the real forces that are shaping the present, the economic forces, the international forces. If you keep all this in view, you will see your problems in India in the true perspective. As a rule what do you do? As a rule you are talking so much of the problems of our country. We get nervous. We get excited over communal problems, the Hindu-Muslim problem. Anyhow, when these problems arise, we try to understand them and solve them.

After all, if we look at these problems from the larger perspective of history, we see they come to nothing. They are like bubbles which exist for a moment and then burst. Try to understand them in the larger perspective.

We talk so much of the depressed classes. Economically, they are landless labour in India, people who were deprived of lands in the remote past and who have been kept deprived of them for this long period. Ultimately it becomes an economic problem of raising their standard. Give them proper facilities and the problem will not remain.

The position of women in India is terribly bad, in spite of the very beautiful talks about Sita and Savitri. They are oppressed and suppressed. They are not allowed to grow. No country can progress if its women-folk is suppressed or oppressed. If they are cultured and advanced, then you are cultured and advanced. If you imagine that you are going to do brave deeds and your women will sit behind you, occasionally cheering you for the brave deeds and patting you on the back, that will not be good enough. You cannot make them burdens on the society, you cannot make them burdens on the nation. No country can progress with this burden. Ultimately the thing that will count is the economic freedom of women. Women ultimately rise when they are not economically dependent on others and that will solve the problem completely.

Talking about the freedom of India, if you do not apply these ideas of freedom to people who surround you, your mothers, your sisters and your daughters, it shows that you have no unified conception of freedom even. That is not freedom, but some anti-British feeling, anti-foreign feeling, and that is not good. The conception of freedom is something better. It is freedom from social thralldom, it is economic freedom of the masses. If you include all these freedoms in your conception of national freedom then you have a right conception of freedom.

Whenever you consider these various problems, consider them in this wider aspect. If you want to do effective work, you have to do two things. You should understand this problem from this wider perspective and try to understand the international problems so as to understand what is happening there. On the other hand, take part in the day to day activity and struggle of the peasants and workers and masses. But you do not go higher up nor do you come down to the soil. You remain in the thin rarefied air in the middle. Instead of living in this thin middle air I want you to go down. Go to the poor people's quarter in Calcutta or a few miles outside it. Try to understand them, try to understand what they do and how they work. When you go to villages,

you also do a lot of good to yourselves. It makes a great deal of difference to the person who goes there. It gives you the knowledge of things, it gives you character, it gives you discipline. Therefore, if you want to do work, go to the working people's quarters outside Calcutta and some villages and just do a useful job. Sweep the road if possible. Know how they live, what is their standard of living. And then you will get a greater insight into the economics of India. If you do that, it will give you insight into the masses of India, it will make you effective workers.

This communal question is a bogus question in India, although people might be excited over it. The real questions which affect India are questions of poverty, unemployment and freedom. People sometimes argue about percentages here and there. When individuals and groups think that their power depends on percentages, it seems to me that they have lost all conception of what power is. It is not numbers that count, today you find relatively small nations are very powerful nations. England is a small nation but it is a powerful nation. Strength will come to us when we develop fine qualities, when we have fine human materials. A community which has good human materials is a strong community. I want you to think in terms of these fundamental problems. We are of the earth, but we must look higher up.

"Lord, though I lived on earth, a child of earth,
Yet I was fathered by the starry skies."

26. Calcutta¹

I go back from Calcutta after five crowded and strenuous days, a little tired but full of hope and elation. The weariness of the body counts for little and it passes when there is freshness of the spirit; and these days in Calcutta have refreshed me and put new energy into me.

Here, in this great city, I met many old comrades of the Congress, many people representing the districts of Bengal, representatives of the workers, young men and women, and all manner of other folk. I had

1. Statement to the press, Calcutta, 9 November 1936. *The Hindu*, 10 November 1936. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 61-63.

the privilege of attending the meetings of the Bengal provincial Congress committee. We were faced by a somewhat intricate problem, but both in the consideration of this problem and in the discussions over wider issues I found an overwhelming desire on the part of all to cooperate with each other, to pull together amongst themselves and with the rest of India in the great cause of Indian freedom which is the predominant issue in our country today.

That the B.P.C.C. passed a unanimous resolution is a matter for great satisfaction and I congratulate it on this achievement.² More than that, however, what impressed me was the spirit which underlay this decision and the other problems that it faced. There seemed to be a vivid realisation that our salvation demanded the sinking of petty differences and the building up of a strong and impregnable front against the imperialism that envelops us and crushes us. The measure of our realising this and understanding the wider issues that face us is the measure of our strength and hope for the future. I rejoice that Bengal stands together, a united house, prepared to face the opponents of Indian freedom and to cooperate fully in the cause of Indian freedom and the emancipation of the masses from exploitation.

This spirit was visible not only in the ranks of the workers but in the general public. The magnificent welcome that was given to me on my arrival and the vast multitudes that I have addressed at numerous meetings are evidence of the faith of Bengal in the Congress and her vitality. The personal affection and consideration that I have received here from everybody has been overwhelming and it is difficult for me to express my deep gratitude for it. I shall remember it for long years.

Not all the repression and suppression that Bengal has had to put up with has damped the spirit of her people or made them waver in their passion for freedom. This unquenchable spirit of hers shines brightly through all their torment and suffering. That spirit will conquer, I have no doubt. But, lest we fritter our energy over the less important things, we must always remember that first things must always come first and the first thing in India is Indian freedom, and the appalling poverty of India's millions. Everything else is secondary.

I go back now but Bengal will be often in my thoughts and we in the rest of India will expect brave things from the people of Bengal. I shall not say good-bye, for we shall meet again often and often in comradeship in the great cause.

2. The B.P.C.C. resolution passed on 8 November 1936 expressed satisfaction at the rejection of the Communal Award in the Congress election manifesto.

27. Message to Utkal¹

For the first time I have visited the Utkal province though my visit has been all too brief and has just exceeded two days. During these two days, however, I have visited Cuttack, Puri, Bhubaneswar, Berhampur and a score of villages besides many wayside gatherings of peasants. This hurried tour has brought home to me more than ever the appalling poverty of the people of Utkal. The brave and fighting Kalingas, who have made such a mark in our old history, today are the especial victims of flood and famine as well as the imperialist exploitation of our country. In this poverty-stricken country of ours, Utkal seems to be the greatest sufferer and I have seen this suffering in the sunken faces of innumerable people. For Utkal as for the rest of India the problems of poverty and unemployment are urgent and overwhelming and Swaraj must come soon to put an end to them. The rest of India has a special charge in regard to Utkal and the Congress, I trust, will give all the help it can to our comrades in Utkal. The sorrow and suffering of Utkal draw me and I hope that I may come again to this province and be of greater service to her people than I have been on this occasion. Utkal is at present entangled to some extent in the problems created by the new province. But they are trivial and secondary compared to the vital national issues which face us all. I am sure that Utkal will stand by the Congress and face with us these issues. To my comrades of the Congress in Utkal I am beholden for the trouble they took for my tour, and to the people of Utkal I am deeply grateful for the warm affection of their welcome. The bonds that unite us will hold and will grow stronger for ours is a common struggle and a common destiny.

Question: Do the special circumstances in the province require the Congress to accept office?

Jawaharlal Nehru: Whatever it be, an all-India decision should be followed everywhere. All-India problems are more important than local problems.

1. Statement to the press, Tekkali, 12 November 1936. *The Hindu*, 14 November 1936; *The Tribune*, 15 November 1936.

28. The Importance of the Election Manifesto¹

Dear Comrade,

I have been surprised to find sometimes that candidates selected by the Congress for the coming provincial elections are not fully acquainted with the Congress election manifesto. This is very much to be regretted for the whole election campaign of the Congress must be based on this manifesto. We are fighting this election not on personal grounds but for certain principles and certain larger objectives. We miss the whole significance of this position of the Congress if we fail to lay stress on these vital issues. Individuals must not count for us in this election, it is the cause that counts.

I suggest to you to address each one of your selected, as well as prospective, candidates for election on this subject and make this point quite clear to them. Each one of them should be sent a copy of the Congress election manifesto which should be carefully read by him or her. The candidate must base his entire campaign on this manifesto and should refer to it in any election statements that he might make. He should distribute copies of the manifesto widely to his electorate and the general public in his constituency. In short, he should make it clear to all concerned what the Congress stands for and what he or she, as a representative of the Congress, stands for.

I invite your immediate attention to this matter and trust you will take very early action.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Circular to the provincial Congress committees and parliamentary boards, 1 December 1936. A.I.C.C. File No. G-37/1936, p. 125, N.M.M.L.

29. The Need for More Women Candidates¹

Dear Comrade,

The selection of candidates for the provincial elections has largely been made on behalf of the provincial Congress committees. Still some seats remain to be provided for and I venture to bring to your notice an important matter on which I feel that sufficient stress has not been laid so far. This relates to women candidates.

The great and significant part that our womenfolk have played in the national struggle for freedom is the most outstanding event of recent years. It is right that we should open out fresh avenues of service for them and recognise in practice, as we have already done in theory, their right to an equal share in public and national activity. They have fully earned this right, if I may venture to say so, but even apart from this, the right was theirs. From the larger viewpoint of national progress, it is essential that women should share in the responsibilities as well as the triumphs of the struggle.

We must also not forget that our womenfolk have consistently refused special and reserved representation in the legislatures. They have even protested against the partial representation that has been given to them. That attitude must be appreciated by the nation as a whole and we should see to it that they do not suffer for it.

It is therefore necessary that we should provide for women candidates to stand for as many general constituencies as possible, apart from the special seats allotted to them. I earnestly trust that every effort will be made to do this.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Circular to the provincial Congress committees and parliamentary boards, 1 December 1936. A.I.C.C. File No. G-37/1936, pp. 125-127.

30. To Beohar Rajendra Sinha¹

Camp Lucknow
December 1, 1936

Dear Rajendra Sinha²,

I am sorry I have not been able to write to you but I am constantly moving about and it is very difficult to find time to write. Even now I can only write very briefly.

The Congress attitude to landholders is contained in various resolutions. Broadly speaking it is this, that the present land system requires radical changes. The Congress is considering what changes should be made and is yet undecided about them. Meanwhile it has suggested a very substantial reduction in the rent and revenue. It had further suggested some years back that there should be no intermediaries between the state and the cultivator. In spite of this it is true to say that the Congress has not decided anything in favour of ending the present system of landlordism. While therefore it thinks that a big change is necessary it does not know what this is going to be.

So far as my attitude is concerned I have written about it at some length in books and essays. I would specially refer you to some answers I gave in London in January last.³ These are contained in my book called *India and the World*.

I think that the present land system in India is wholly out of date and is breaking down. It cannot last long though it may carry on for some years. The problem of our poverty and the land cannot be solved within the ambit of this system. It must therefore be admitted that this system must go, and with it landlordism as such. How this will go will depend entirely on the circumstances then existing. I should like it to go as peacefully as possible and with the least injury to any group. I am perfectly prepared for reasonable compensation to be given, the nature and extent of this to be determined carefully having regard to the circumstances and to the fact that it must not involve a burden on the peasantry. This of course envisages a solution by compromise of this problem. I would like to have such a solution because anything else is bound to be a much more costly and much more painful affair. No one can say what the solution would be

1. A.I.C.C. File No. E-22/1937, pp. 41, N.M.M.L. The last paragraph is from *The Leader*, 21 December 1936.

2. (b. 1900); he was the Congress candidate for the C.P. Assembly from the northern districts landholders' seat.

3. See *ante*, pp. 110-111.

if it resulted from a big conflict. I would at any time think in terms of a democratic solution, that is, the majority of the people deciding.

I have laid my views before the people as I think I have every right to do, in order to make them think over this urgent and important problem. We cannot solve it now because we have not the power to do so. But it is right that we should think about it as it cannot be ignored. If the A.I.C.C. think that I am not entitled to give my own views on this, in my capacity as Congress President, it is for them to say so and it will be for me then to decide what I should do.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

31. To B. C. Roy¹

Allahabad
Dec. 3, 1936

My dear Bidhan,

Thank you for the copy of your letter to Govind Ballabh Pant which you have sent to me. I do not know what you expect from me in the way of inspiration and guidance,² but if I may venture to offer a suggestion—why not arrange for some of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas to be shown in Calcutta for the free entertainment and instruction of our over-worked and over-worried colleagues? Of course there is that other sovereign remedy, of standing on one's head, which the Bengal parliamentary board and the B.P.C.C. might indulge in with advantage. I can commend this method from personal experience though of course you with your limited medical trade union outlook are not likely to appreciate it.

Probably it will take some time for you to fix up the Gilbert and Sullivan operas. Meanwhile we have to carry on with this election business and I suppose something in the nature of a decision has to be arrived at, even though it might be upset the next morning. The Working Committee will be meeting in Bombay on the 9th and perhaps the Parliamentary Board might also meet then. Kindly send any

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-6/1936, p. 37, N.M.M.L.

2. Bidhan Roy had asked for advice on settling election disputes in Bengal.

further report that you like us to consider to Bombay care of the Congress House there.

In the various possible courses that you have suggested you have forgotten one. Let us all stand for election and may the devil take the hindmost.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

32. To Vidyagauri Nilkanth¹

December 7, 1936

Dear Lady Nilkanth,²

I thank you for your letter.³ Indeed you have my good wishes for the Women's Conference. I have always felt strongly that whatever major question we may have to consider in India, this must be considered in relation to the problem of women's progress. I have watched the growth of the women's movement in India with great interest. I have felt however that this has been largely confined to the upper classes. I think it will gather strength only when it spreads out to other classes also, just as the National Congress became great and powerful when it reached the lower middle class and the masses. Inevitably the leadership of your movement will remain among upper class women. But if the movement is going to be a live one it must deal with the problems of the vast majority of women in India.

The women's movement also must continue to take a great part in the freedom struggle in India. They are directly concerned with this as much as the men and even for their own particular problems they

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5(a)/1936, p. 275, N.M.M.L.

2. (1876-1958); a social reformer who was connected with several women's organisations; president, All India Women's Conference, 1932-33, and president of its Gujarat branch at this time.

3. In her letter of 2 December 1936 she had requested Jawaharlal to send his message of good wishes for the eleventh session of the All India Women's Conference to be held at Ahmedabad.

will come nearer to success through their participation in the larger struggle for freedom.

I wish you again all success.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

33. Message to Congress Candidates¹

December 7th 1936

Dear Comrade,

You have been chosen as a candidate to contest the election to the provincial legislature on behalf of the Congress. I greet you as such and send you my good wishes. It is an honour to be so chosen; it is even more a responsibility, and I would have you remember this responsibility more than the honour. As a Congress candidate you do not stand in your individual capacity, but as one pledged, in common with innumerable others, to a great enterprise. You stand for Congress principles and Congress objectives, for India's freedom and the ending of the many burdens that crush her people. You become a standard-bearer of the Congress, reflecting to some extent the greatness of that organisation which has come to represent the urges and desires, the hopes and fears, the failings and the strength of the Indian people.

Surely it is a great responsibility that you carry, for you have the honour of the Congress and the nation in your charge. Be jealous of that precious charge and allow no one to tarnish it. We fight for success and we shall have that success, but even success must not be purchased by stooping or by forgetting the ideals of conduct which have cast a lustre on the Congress name and raised us out of our petty selves.

You know what the Congress stands for, you have read the Congress election manifesto. I trust that you will base your election campaign on this manifesto and make it clear to our people what we struggle for and why we carry on this great struggle. We do not fight for petty and ineffective reforms but for India's independence and freedom for the Indian masses. We enter the legislatures to combat the new

1. A.I.C.C. File No. E-1/1936-37, pp. 49-51, N.M.M.L.

Act and to try to end it. Our election campaign must revolve round that central pivot. There is no room in it for personalities or personal and petty issues.

May success attend your efforts.

Yours in the cause of India's freedom,
Jawaharlal Nehru

34. A Message to Socialists¹

Comrade Masani has asked me for a message to your Conference.² I send my greeting gladly and I hope that your deliberations will result in good to the great cause we have at heart. That cause today is best served by building up a powerful anti-imperialist joint front in the country. It is obvious that the National Congress is the only organisation which can function as such a joint front.

As you know I am vastly interested in the socialist approach to all questions. It is right that we should understand the theory underlying this approach. This helps to clarify our minds and give purpose to our activities. But two aspects of this question fill my own mind. One is how to apply this approach to Indian conditions. The other is how to speak of socialism in the language of India. I think it is often forgotten that if we are to be understood we must speak the language of the country. I am not merely referring to the various languages of India. I am referring much more to the language of the mind and the heart, to the language which grows from a complex of associations of past history and culture and present environment. So long as we do not speak in some language which has that Indian mentality for background we lose a great measure of our effectiveness. Merely to use words and phrases, which may have meaning for us but which are not current coin among the masses of India, is often wasted effort. It is this problem of the approach to socialism that occupies my mind—

1. Faizpur, 20 December 1936. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 24 December 1936. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 95-96.

2. The All India Congress Socialist conference was held on 23 December 1936.

how to interpret it in terms of India, how to reach the hearts of the people with its hope-giving and inspiring message.

That is a question which I should like a socialist to consider well.

35. To Mohanlal Saxena¹

December 21, 1936

My dear Mohanlal,

Your letter has just come. You need not apologise quite so much. There is no need for apologies or explanations. I do not mind very much whether you are a delegate or not.² That does not make much difference. I see that we have a hard time ahead of us in the province and in the country. The opposition of government never worries me. But I am worried at certain tendencies towards the development of undesirable cliques in the Congress and the enormous capacity for intrigue that some people have. We shall have to fight that. I am not myself a retiring person and I like to be in the thick of a fight. It seems to me that the first job that we have to face is this job of cleaning our own house.

About your proposal for a resolution about political prisoners and detenus I shall consult others.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5/1937, p. 341, N.M.M.L.

2. Saxena had not been selected to attend the Congress session at Faizpur.

THE WORLD OUTSIDE



1. Observance of Abyssinia Day¹

Addis Ababa lies at the foot of the conqueror. Ethiopia, in spite of her gallant defence of her independence, lies helpless and prostrate before the brutal might of fascist imperialism. Poison gas and liquid fire and all the modern engines of destruction have triumphed and in their triumph have not only exposed afresh the true nature of imperialism, but have also shown us the hypocrisy and duplicity of the Great Powers and the utter futility of that body which is known as the League of Nations. For the moment imperialism triumphs again in the long world struggle for freedom, but that struggle will go on in Ethiopia as elsewhere till freedom comes and puts an end to imperialism everywhere. We in India can do nothing to help our brethren in distress in Ethiopia for we also are the victims of imperialism. But we can at least send them our deep sympathy in this hour of their trial. We stand with them today in their sorrow as we hope to stand together when better days come. I appeal to the Indian people therefore to give a countrywide expression to our sympathy and solidarity with the Ethiopian people and our resolve not to submit to the fascist imperialist menace. I trust that demonstrations for this purpose will be held throughout the country on Saturday next, May 9. The Sunday following, May 10th, as I have previously appealed, will be observed as Subhas Day to register our indignation at the suppression of civil liberties in India.²

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 5 May 1936. *The Leader*, 7 May 1936.

2. See *ante*, section 6, item 5.

2. Reply to Italian Consul-General¹

The Italian consul-general in Calcutta has criticised and expressed his resentment at my issuing an appeal for the observance of an Abyssinia Day to express our deep sympathy for the people of Ethiopia in their hour of trial and humiliation. He has protested against what he

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 8 May 1936. *The Leader*, 10 May 1936.

terms "empty talks" against Italy, a country which has always been friendly to India. Against Italy and the Italian people we have no grievance and for the friendliness they have shown to us in the past we are grateful. To me personally Italy has been dear from my childhood days. Her wonderful natural beauty and magnificent art have drawn me to her; her history has fascinated me. The story of her freedom struggle has been an inspiration of my youth. I have felt the majesty of Rome with its long and varied heritage, the mysterious charm of Florence, the beauty of Venice and Naples. But our love and admiration for Italy have nothing to do with our hostility to imperialism and fascism. The passionate love that we, who are the children of India, bear to our motherland does not mean approval of the imperialist machine that governs and crushes us. That very love calls upon us to combat this imperialism and to free our country. And wherever imperialism appears, in whatever guise it might be, it is the opponent of the forces struggling for freedom and we have to oppose it.

What are the Ethiopian people, I am asked. They are the people who have been subjugated by the Italian forces by fire and sword. They are a backward people, I know, and they have many failings. They may lack unity, and imperialism, as in India, may spread disunity amongst them. But I repudiate utterly the suggestion that imperialism has gone to Abyssinia, or come to India, for humanitarian motives or the spread of civilization.² Imperialism goes to exploit and remains to exploit and the people under its heel sink materially and spiritually. Its true messengers in Abyssinia have been poison gas and liquid fire and they reveal its nature more than any argument. That is the foretaste of the civilization that it brings, and we in India, who suffer humiliation enough in our land, cannot permit the additional spiritual degradation of remaining silent when imperialism spreads out its cruel wings and crushes other peoples.

I appeal therefore again to the Indian people to observe Saturday, May 9, as Abyssinia Day and to send their heartfelt message of sympathy to the people of that unhappy country.

2. Criticising Jawaharlal, the consul-general had said, "Today Rome, the teacher of civilization to the world, cuts the chains and throws open to Abyssinian people the garden gates of an era of disciplined development and of material and spiritual welfare."

3. The Lessons of Abyssinia¹

We have met here frequently in the past to consider and express our resentment at the policy and acts of British imperialism in relation to India and our freedom struggle. Tomorrow we shall gather together again for a like purpose, to send our loving greeting to a dear comrade of ours who has been the latest victim of that imperialism, and to express our indignation at the tremendous suppression of civil liberties from which we suffer in this country. But today we look to another part of the world, far from India, and to another imperialism, and we meet sorrowfully to consider a tragedy that has befallen our brethren in Abyssinia. They are not our brothers by race or country, but a common bond holds us together, for we both are victims of imperialist greed and exploitation. Ours is an old story of imperialist domination, we are the classic land where modern imperialism first established itself and became a fore-runner of and an example to others; theirs is a new tale and the rape is still fresh and flagrant for the world to see. We can do nothing for them, we cannot help them in any way, but it is right that we meet together to send our deepest sympathy to our brethren in distress and in the bitter hour of their defeat and humiliation to express our solidarity with them, and our determination to combat imperialism in whatever shape or form it works.

And from this tragedy of a brave people we can learn many lessons. The first lesson is that imperialism and fascism, though they function through many countries and governments, are fundamentally of the same nature, the same urges push them forward, they pursue the same methods, and they are bent on the same exploitation of subject peoples. The body is the same though the heads are many, and though often the heads argue and quarrel with each other. It is this fascist imperialism which dominates a great part of the world today and which opposes the forces working for freedom. The problem of freedom therefore for each country has two aspects—the first is the obvious one of gaining national freedom against the imperialism that prevents this, the second is equally important, though not so obvious, it is the international struggle of the forces of freedom against the forces of imperialism. And

1. Speech on Abyssinia Day, Allahabad, 9 May 1936. *The Hindustan Times*, 11 May 1936.

thus the fate of Abyssinia is not something distant and unrelated to us, it becomes part of our own larger struggle for freedom.

The second lesson we have to learn is from the significant and revealing attitude of the Great Powers towards this Abyssinian problem, especially that of England. We have heard all their brave talk of sanctions and the like, of supporting Abyssinia and giving her assistance, and we have seen how they have failed her at every step. Few things in past years have shown up more the duplicity and hypocrisy of these Great Powers than this betrayal of Abyssinia after the brave promises made to her. They applied some petty and ineffective sanctions but the oil sanction, which might have made a difference, was deliberately avoided. They were jealous of Italy and so tried to hinder her a little, but they could not afford to see an imperialist power suffer defeat at the hands of a colonial country.

The third lesson which recent events shout out at us is the utter futility of the League of Nations. Anything more extraordinary than the weakness and helplessness of the League in the face of aggression by one of its members over another it would be hard to find, unless one goes to China. The League looked on calmly while horrible methods of warfare were employed against the Abyssinians and poison gas and liquid fire tortured and killed women and children. The League may continue, as the dying continue for long, but no one can consider it as a means for enforcing collective security. The last effort of our present-day capitalist world to build up some kind of a world order and check war has failed. Every dictator now knows that he can totally ignore the League, and war thus comes nearer than ever before a frightened world. And this war, we have seen, comes now secretly, unheralded and unannounced, and spreads utter destruction wherever it goes.

And so today while we think with sorrow and sympathy of the Abyssinian people we think also of this wider problem which affects us as it affects the entire world; we think of the numerous peoples of the great continent of Africa who have been stirred by the Abyssinian conflict and who will not long remain the silent exploited people who have borne the cross for ages; we think of our own freedom struggle and see it in relation to the wider struggle against fascist imperialism the world over. And if we think rightly and see world events together in proper perspective, we are more likely to act rightly and work our way to our own freedom.

4. To Robert O. Jordan¹

May 12, 1936

Dear Comrade,²

I have received with pleasure your letter of April 13 conveying to us your good wishes for our freedom struggle and your expression of solidarity with us in our common fight against imperialism the world over.³ We heartily reciprocate your sentiments and assure you that, engrossed as we are in our own national struggle, we realise fully that this is a part of the world struggle for the freedom of the oppressed and the exploited. We have the warmest feelings for the African peoples in Africa and elsewhere and we follow their efforts to emancipate themselves with every sympathy.

The tragic fate that has overtaken Ethiopia has come as a shock to the whole of India. On the 9th May an Abyssinia Day was observed throughout the length and breadth of our country and innumerable meetings were held to express the deep sympathy of the Indian people with the people of Ethiopia in their hour of trial and sorrow. We are convinced, however, that the Ethiopian nation will not end its struggle in spite of the great difficulties facing it.

In India we stand for full independence and not for any association with British imperialism. But we also work for a close association of free peoples and nations in order to build up a world order where there is no exploitation of one country by another and one class by another.

Situated as we are, it is our misfortune that we cannot be of any effective assistance to our Ethiopian brethren. Although India is supposed to be a member of the League of Nations, it is really the British Government that profits by this, for the so-called Indian representative is nominated by that government. We have no say in the matter.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. FD. 8/1936, pp. 19-20, N.M.M.L.

2. President of the Ethiopian Pacific Movement in the U.S.A.

3. In his letter Robert Jordan had congratulated Jawaharlal on his Lucknow address, said that both Ethiopians and Indians were fighting for the cause of liberty, and stressed the need of unity to fight for the oppressed in Asia and Africa.

We shall be glad to maintain contact with your movement and to receive from you such literature and bulletins as you might issue. Our foreign department will also gladly send you our publications.

With all good wishes,

I am,
Sincerely yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

5. The Arabs and Jews in Palestine¹

My expression of sympathy with the Arab national movement and their struggle for freedom has brought me some protests from Jews in India.² I venture therefore to state a little more fully what my attitude is to this problem of Palestine.

Few people, I imagine, can withhold their deep sympathy from the Jews for the long centuries of the most terrible oppression to which they have been subjected all over Europe. Fewer still can repress their indignation at the barbarities and racial suppression of the Jews which the Nazis have indulged in during the last few years, and which continue today. Even outside Germany, Jew-baiting has become a favourite pastime of various fascist groups. This revival in an intense form of racial intolerance and race war is utterly repugnant to me and I have been deeply distressed at the sufferings of vast numbers of people of the Jewish race. Many of these unfortunate exiles, with no country or home to call their own, are known to me, and some I consider it an honour to call my friends.

I approach this question therefore with every sympathy for the Jews. So far as I am concerned the racial or the religious issue does not affect my opinion.

But my reading of war-time and post-war history shows that there was a gross betrayal of the Arabs by British imperialism. The many

1. Statement to the press, 13 June 1936. *The Tribune*, 16 June 1936. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 127-131.

2. In April 1936, there was an Arab revolt against the British in Palestine.

promises that were made to them by Colonel Lawrence³ and others, on behalf of the British Government, and which resulted in the Arabs helping the British and Allied Powers during the war, were consistently ignored after the war was over. All the Arabs, in Syria, Iraq, Trans-Jordan and Palestine, smarted under this betrayal, but the position of the Arabs in Palestine was undoubtedly the worst of all. Having been promised freedom and independence repeatedly from 1915 onwards, suddenly they found themselves converted into a mandatory territory⁴ with a new burden added on—the promise of the creation of a national home for the Jews⁵—a burden which almost made it impossible for them to realise independence.

The Jews have a right to look to Jerusalem and their Holy Land and to have free access to them. But the position after the Balfour declaration was very different. A new state within a state was sought to be created in Palestine, an ever-growing state with the backing of British imperialism behind it, and the hope was held out that this new Jewish state would, in the near future, become so powerful in numbers and in economic position that it would dominate the whole of Palestine. Zionist policy aimed at this domination and worked for it, though, I believe, some sections of Jewish opinion were opposed to this aggressive attitude. Inevitably, the Zionists opposed the Arabs and looked for protection and support to the British Government.

Such case as the Zionists had might be called a moral one, their ancient associations with their Holy Land and their present reverence for it. One may sympathise with it. But what of the Arabs? For them also it was a holy land—both for the Muslim and the Christian Arabs. For thirteen hundred years or more they had lived there and all their national and racial interests had taken strong roots there. Palestine was not an empty land fit for colonisation by outsiders. It was a well-populated and full land with little room for large numbers of colonists from abroad. Is it any wonder that the Arabs objected to this intrusion? And their objection grew as they realised that the

3. Thomas Edward Lawrence (1888-1935), a picturesque character popularly known as "Lawrence of Arabia"; attached to the expeditionary force assisting the Arab revolt in 1917; took part in Sherif Abdulla's Arab revolt against the Turks and entered Damascus with Arab forces in 1918; member of the British delegation at the peace conference in 1919; author of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.
4. The League of Nations passed a resolution on 24 July 1922 making Palestine a mandatory territory under the British.
5. Arthur Balfour, the foreign secretary, made a declaration on behalf of the British Government on 2 November 1917 supporting the claim of the Jews for a "national home" in Palestine.

aim of British imperialism was to make the Arab-Jew problem a permanent obstacle to their independence. We in India have sufficient experience of similar obstacles being placed in the way of our freedom by British imperialism.

It is quite possible that a number of Jews might have found a welcome in Palestine and settled down there. But when the Zionists came with the avowed object of pushing out the Arabs from all places of importance and of dominating the country, they could hardly be welcomed. And the fact that they have brought much money from outside and started industries and schools and universities cannot diminish the opposition of the Arabs, who see with dismay the prospect of their becoming permanently a subject race, dominated, politically and economically, by the Zionists and the British Government.

The problem of Palestine is thus essentially a nationalist one—a people struggling for independence against imperialist control and exploitation. It is not a racial or religious one. Perhaps some of our Muslim fellow-countrymen extend their sympathy to the Arabs because of the religious bond. But the Arabs are wiser and they lay stress only on nationalism and independence, and it is well to remember that all Arabs, Christian as well as Muslim, stand together in this struggle against British imperialism. Indeed some of the most prominent leaders of the Arabs in this national struggle have been Christians.

If the Jews had been wise they would have thrown in their lot with the Arab struggle for independence. Instead they have chosen to side with British imperialism and to seek its protection against the people of the country. Ultimately, therefore, the struggle resolves itself into one of nationalism *versus* imperialism, and all other minor aspects of it, such as the Arab-Jew problem, though important today, have little historical significance. In the same way the communal problem, spoil child of British imperialism, looms large in India today, but in the wide range of history it loses all importance.

India and Palestine both have their national problems and both struggle for independence; they have something in common in this struggle and the opponent is the same. In both cases, as elsewhere, nationalism comes into contact with new social forces and is affected thereby, and gradually takes shape as an aspect of the world problem, which affects us all alike whether we realise it or not. We must therefore understand each other and sympathise with each other.

As we take this long view the Arab-Jew question fades into insignificance. The Arabs of Palestine will no doubt gain their independence, but this is likely to be a part of the larger unity of Arab peoples for which the countries of western Asia have so long hankered after, and

this again will be part of the new order which will emerge out of present-day chaos. The Jews, if they are wise, will accept the teaching of history, and make friends with the Arabs and throw their weight on the side of the independence of Palestine, and not seek a position of advantage and dominance with the help of the imperialist power.

I trust, therefore, that the people of India will send their warmest greetings and good wishes to the Arabs of Palestine in their brave struggle for freedom against a powerful adversary.

6. The Arab National Struggle¹

I am sorry I have to go away from Allahabad and not be present here on the day of the Palestine conference. If I had been here I would have gladly attended it to express my sympathy and solidarity with the Arabs who are struggling so bravely for the freedom of their country. This struggle as I conceive it has little to do with religion. It is not against the Jews as such. It is a national struggle in which Arabs of different faiths are joining hands for the common object of securing independence for their country. It is a struggle against imperialism. And there is much in common between their struggle for freedom and ours and, even on narrow grounds of self-interest, we in India should support and sympathise with the Arabs. The National Congress has already expressed its sympathy for the Arabs and sent them the good wishes of the Indian people. I trust that this Arab struggle in Palestine will help us to see our own struggle in proper perspective and make us forget our internal divisions in the face of the common adversary.

1. Message to the provincial Palestine conference held on 18 July 1936 at Allahabad. *The Hindu*, 19 July 1936.

7. To V. K. Krishna Menon¹

August 6, 1936

My dear Krishna,

...I gather that Lohia has been in correspondence with you both about civil liberties and other matters. I do not propose to write to you today about political matters partly for lack of time and partly because the subject is really too complicated to tackle off-hand. I seem to be sitting continually surrounded by all manner of knots which I am trying to unravel. For the present however interest goes out to the happenings in Spain and to the great influence they are likely to have on the future shaping of events in Europe and the world.

Indira wrote to me that she lunched with you and that she found you looking better and more cheerful, which is good news.

You will remember that the Congress passed a cordial resolution of sympathy with the World Peace Congress that is going to be held in Geneva² early next month. This is the Congress with which all manner and kinds of people from Romain Rolland to Robert Cecil are connected. I have been getting long cablegrams from these people urging us to send someone to attend the Congress. But it is quite impossible for us to do so. That is a pity for it could have been worthwhile for us to be officially represented there.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

2. It was, in fact, held at Brussels.

8. Message to the World Peace Congress¹

While we desire peace and try to check the forces making for war, we feel that real peace can come only when the causes of war are removed.

1. Allahabad, 2 September 1936. *The Leader*, 6 September 1936.

The Peace Congress, therefore, must try to discover these causes of war and seek to remedy them. Otherwise all its efforts will be largely wasted. We need not touch upon those causes which make for war in the world and which are at present agitating Europe, for you are well acquainted with them. But I should like to emphasize that peace in colonial countries can only be established with the removal of imperialist domination for imperialism is itself the negation of peace. Therefore, for us in India, as well as for other countries situated like us, the first step must be political freedom, to be followed, I hope, by social freedom. Thus we shall be able to build up in our country, in common with the rest of the world, an enduring foundation for peace and freedom and human progress.

In India today we suffer from all the ills of imperialist domination and exploitation, and our energies, therefore, are directed towards the removal of these evils. The new Act which the British Parliament has passed with reference to the Indian constitution strengthens this imperialist domination instead of weakening it. Therefore, we have to combat it and we should like our comrades of other countries to realise this present situation in India and the difficulties we have to face. In the economic sphere the distress of the peasantry as well as of the workers and of a large number of middle class unemployed is acute. Thus the economic situation has reached a stage when a mere political solution without the solution of the economic problem will bring little relief to the people. Still the political solution must inevitably precede all other steps. And that political solution can only be the independence of India. The Indian National Congress stands for this independence, because it believes that only thus can it solve the social problem that confronts the country.

But while our National Congress works for Indian independence it does not believe in an isolated and aggressive nationalism. It looks forward to a world order based on equity and cooperation between nations. We trust that the World Peace Congress will work to this end so that the root causes of war might be removed and an era of peace and progress dawn on this distracted world.

9. The Importance of the World Peace Congress¹

On the 6th of September the World Peace Congress meets at Brussels. Among the many efforts that have been made to consolidate the forces of peace, this Congress is the most remarkable, and it represents more than any other a consolidation of all the forces in the world today, that stand for peace and progress. The most diverse elements and groups, ranging from some members of the Conservative Party in England, Liberals, Labourites, supporters of the Popular Front in France, enthusiasts for the League of Nations idea, pacifists, socialists, communists, heads of progressive governments in Europe and innumerable organizations all over the world have joined their forces to combat the growing menace of fascism and world war.

Our own National Congress is taking its full part in this World Congress and will be represented by Mr. V.K. Krishna Menon.

It is strange that this Congress should meet just when the world seems to be on the verge of a precipice and a terrible war on an unimaginable scale threatens the entire world, when in Spain a bloody and horrible civil war is devastating the country, and when every country is preparing feverishly for a clash that seems inevitable. Yet that is the very reason why this World Peace Congress has become inevitable, and has drawn to its ranks such diverse groups which are prepared to sink their many differences in the face of a common danger.

In Spain today we have some indication of the horror that might overtake the world on a much larger scale. There a peacefully elected democratic government, representing the progressive elements, was suddenly attacked by rebel groups with the aid of a mercenary army from abroad. And these rebels have received considerable material aid from fascist countries, and there has been no lack of sympathy for them even in Britain. Those who talk so loudly of law and order in India do not hesitate to support rebels against the government in Spain. That government was not even socialistic. It was a liberal democratic regime. But because it was progressive it was disliked by reactionaries everywhere, and in Spain today we see a determined attack of fascist forces against a rising democracy.

1. Statement issued at Allahabad, 2 September 1936. *The Hindustan Times*, 4 September 1936.

That is a lesson for us all, and that in miniature shows us the state of the world today. All minor problems sink into insignificance before this vital question of progress *versus* reaction all over the world. It is well that we should throw our weight on the side of progress and peace, and line up with the forces that stand for this. But that peace can come only when the root causes of war are removed. As the Lucknow Congress declared its conviction, "such a peace can only be established on an enduring basis when the causes of war are removed and the domination and exploitation of nation by nation is ended." Peace cannot come out of imperialism or out of fascism, for both are founded on war. I trust that the Indian people will give heed to this problem of world peace with which we are so intimately connected, and send their greetings to the brave effort that is being made in Brussels to combat the menace of war.

10. To Sheila Grant Duff¹

Allahabad
Sept. 3, 1936

...I work in India for Indian freedom because I feel that this is my proper field of activity and I can work most effectively here. But always I try to think in terms of the larger world problems and try to fit India into them. If you have that in view, it does not matter much where you pitch your tent—in Prague or London or India.

I agree with you that we must try to stop war. I would even go so far as to say with you that it is important to allay the immediate causes. But how is one to do this? War will not come from us but from those who oppose us and we cannot control them....

I do not want world war even for the sake of Indian freedom, or perhaps it would be more correct to say that I do not look forward to any real freedom for India as a result of a devastating conflict all over the world. I do not know what the result of such a conflict will be, except that it will destroy a great deal of what we value. But then

1. Extracts published in *India Weekly* (London), 1966. Sheila Grant Duff (now Mrs. Sokolov Grant) met Jawaharlal in England in 1936; author of *Europe and the Czechs* and *The German Protectorate*.

we come back to the question: How are we to stop war? Mere pacifism is not enough and often the revolutionary plays into the hands of the reactionary.

It is all very complicated and we are really forced to look deeper down and then examine the roots of the evil and try to remove them, avoiding, as far as one can, the destruction of the good that we have.

I am afraid I have written a very disjointed letter. It is very late and I am tired and sleepy after a heavy day....

11. Observance of Palestine Day¹

Most of us are absorbed in our own national problems and we are apt to forget what is happening elsewhere. And yet we all feel that the world hangs on the brink of a precipice. In Spain today a fierce and cruel struggle is being carried on, the result of which will influence the future of Europe and of the whole world. Indians, I feel sure, send their good wishes to the forces of the Spanish Government and the Spanish people who are fighting so bravely against a rebellious and largely foreign soldiery. Nearer to us, and on a smaller scale, we see the tragedy of Palestine where the might of the British Empire is being used to crush a gallant people struggling for freedom. The latest news is that additional British armies are being sent to Palestine to break the Arab movement. Palestine is going to be conquered by Britain, and the tragedy of it is that the Jews, themselves the victims of fascism and imperialism, are on the side of imperialism in Palestine. But out of imperialism cannot come freedom or peace.

Our Arab brethren in Palestine have to face a terrible ordeal. Small in numbers they have to face the armed might of an empire. At this time of trial and suffering, let us at least send them again our greetings and good wishes, for we are comrades in the same larger cause, the cause of freedom and anti-imperialism.

I suggest to Congressmen and Congress committees to hold such meetings on Palestine on Sunday next, 27th September. That day will be not only a day of sympathy for the Arabs in Palestine but one of determination to combat imperialism.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 21 September 1936. *The Tribune*, 23 September 1936.

12. To I. Olsvanger¹

September 25, 1936

Dear Dr. Olsvanger,²

I have received your letter.³ The statement⁴ you refer to was issued some days ago, probably the day before I saw you. I am afraid we are not likely to convert each other completely. We approach the question from different viewpoints. But, at any rate, we need not suspect the good faith of the other. It seems to me that you have not done me the courtesy in believing in my *bona fides*. So far as I am concerned politics and morals have seldom drifted far apart and I have tried to act publicly in the Congress with my conception of morality. I believe in every word of what I have said in regard to Palestine. I may change that belief with further knowledge but with all deference to you my knowledge of the world situation is not insignificant. I hold that it is impossible to understand any problem, whether that of India or Palestine, without reference to that larger situation and I hold that the Arab movement is essentially a nationalist movement, though there are certain complicating factors like relics of feudalism, etc. The fact that ignorant or mischievous Arabs have been misbehaving cannot take away from the essential character of that movement. It astonishes me for you to tell me that I am siding with the enemies of freedom in Palestine. In my recent statement I mentioned the large additions to British troops that are being sent to Palestine. I suppose, according to you, these British troops are the friends of freedom in Palestine. I hold differently.

As I dictate this letter my office is being searched by a crowd of policemen under the orders of the local magistrate. This is a gentle reminder to me of how imperialism functions in this country. I cannot tolerate this imperialism in India or Palestine and the question I ask everyone is whether he stands for this imperialism or against it.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5(KW)(ii) Part I/1936, p. 189, N.M.M.L.

2. A Zionist living in Jerusalem.

3. Dr. Olsvanger in his letter of 23 September 1936 argued that it was a conflict between the moral idea of Zionism and certain interests opposed to it. The Arabs were not "gallant people struggling for freedom", as Jawaharlal had described them, but were seeking sympathy from the imperialists.

4. See the preceding item.

13. Spain and Palestine¹

Political India is full today of talk of the coming provincial elections and candidates for these elections are cropping up everywhere. As the days go by we shall probably hear more and more of these elections and the air will be full of sound and fury which always accompany them. Other questions also occupy our minds such as the communal question or even the petty controversy about Hindi and Urdu. And yet how petty all these are before the mighty problems of poverty and unemployment—the poverty that crushes our millions, the unemployment that has us by the throat. Inevitably we must think of these problems for our sphere of thought and action is India.

But to confine ourselves to Indian problems is not good enough, it is not even sufficient for our own national purposes or our struggle for freedom. Every tyro in public life knows that the politics and economics of different countries are related to each other, that the world hangs together today as it has never done before, and the great problems we have to face are essentially world problems. To ignore this world aspect of any major issue is to lose perspective and invite error.

Therefore let us look round the world today with all its conflict and tension and cruelty and unhappiness and, behind all, its vast questioning. We meet today especially to think of the little country of Palestine and of its troubles. In a world view this problem of Palestine has relatively little importance for bigger things are happening elsewhere. And yet it has an intrinsic importance of its own and it throws a light on the working of imperialism from which we ourselves suffer. Therefore it is right that we should consider it and send our greetings to those who are struggling for freedom there.

But before we turn our thoughts to Palestine I should like to take you to Spain for a while for that will give us a broader view of the world stage. It is in Spain today that the most vital happenings are taking place, frightful and terrible events, of enormous consequences to the future of Europe and the world. Our fate in India is bound up with them more than we realise.

What has happened in Spain? Some months ago there were normal democratic elections there and as a result a popular radical party—

1. Speech on Palestine Day at Allahabad, 27 September 1936. From *The Leader*, 28 September 1936. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 132-142.

a joint popular front—came into power.² They formed a government of a liberal democratic variety. It was not a communist or even socialist government. There was not a single communist or socialist in it. They started with a programme of liberal reform to take Spain out of the feudal and reactionary ruts in which it had lived for so long. They made good progress, and then suddenly there was a military rebellion, headed by the army chiefs and other reactionaries.³ And this rebellion first started, not in Spain, but in Morocco with the aid of non-Spanish troops. It was a rebellion against law and order—words so dear to the British Government—against the constituted government of the country, against a moderate liberal regime.

How did these military bosses dare to raise the flag of rebellion? It is clear enough now. They did it with the material aid of the fascist countries of Germany and Italy and, it is interesting to note, financial aid from the big financiers of the City of London.

The Spanish Government and people were taken aback. It was terribly difficult for unorganised and improperly armed masses to face an organised and well-equipped army in rebellion. And this was why the rebels expected an easy victory. But the Spanish people rose at the bidding of their popular government and without discipline or proper arms they faced bravely the rebel armies, most of which consisted of Moroccan troops. There was a mass levy of the people, even boys and girls rushed to the rescue of their hard-won liberty. We saw a strange sight—these masses fighting against regular armies and holding them often in check.

The reactions in other countries were noteworthy. Nazi Germany and fascist Italy were entirely on the side of the rebels and gave them every help. France sympathised with the Spanish Government but dared not help. In England the great newspapers, like the *Times*, frankly sympathised with the rebels, thus indicating clearly the attitude of the British Government and the British ruling classes. British financiers rejoiced at the victories of the rebels. European governments evolved a policy of non-intervention which meant in effect that the Spanish Government could not be helped, but the rebels could draw aid from outside.⁴

And so this terrible tussle goes on in Spain with everything weighed in favour of the rebels. And yet the ordinary people, men and women,

2. The popular front consisting of republicans, socialists, communists, Trotskyites, syndicalists, anarchists and other left-wing groups was elected to power in February 1936.

3. It began on 17 July 1936.

4. At the initiative of France 27 nations agreed on non-intervention.

boys and girls, are keeping their end up and giving their lives in thousands to prevent their country from falling under a bloody and most reactionary tyranny.

In Spain today we see clearly the terrible conflict of the forces of progress and the forces of reaction, the conflict which is latent all over the world. On the issue of this conflict depends whether Europe and the world will be dominated by fascism or not. On that issue depends vast and bloody war all over the world. The triumph of the rebels means the strangling of France by three fascist countries surrounding her. It means that fascism will make a triumphant attempt at world dominion in cooperation with the fascism of Japan.

In this vital issue we find the ruling classes and government of Britain definitely favouring fascism. We find imperialist Britain with her much vaunted democracy sympathising with those who are trying to crush democracy in Spain. For it must be remembered that the struggle in Spain is not between communism or socialism and fascism, but between democracy and a cruel military-fascism.

This is not really surprising, for essentially imperialism and fascism are of one family and if a crisis comes they stand together. All over the world today they oppose the forces of progress—in Europe of social progress, in India and other subject countries of even political progress. Between imperialist and fascist powers there is also inherent conflict for many of them want a greater share in the spoils of exploitation. But despite this mutual conflict they sympathise with and aid each other as against the social urge to freedom and the nationalist struggle for political freedom. And thus we find the Indian struggle for independence a part of this world struggle against imperialism and fascism. So also the struggle that is going on against British imperialism in Palestine.

We must have this larger and clearer view or else we shall lose ourselves in a maze and fail to understand events. But if we have this to guide us and to provide us with a yard measure we shall be able to judge of happenings correctly and we shall know which group or individual is on this side of the struggle or that. In India we find sometimes persons, posing as experts on foreign affairs, expressing sympathy for the rebel cause in Spain or for fascism generally, and some of our newspapers unthinkingly accept this outlook. Essentially this is propaganda for the fascist and reactionary cause. It is not surprising that reactionaries in India should sympathise with reactionaries elsewhere.

In Palestine the problem seems to be one of Arabs and Jews, and some of our Muslim friends here look upon it as a religious problem

demanding sympathy for their co-religionists. That is a wrong and misleading outlook. It is a problem of a growing nationalism desiring freedom and being suppressed by imperialism. In this process, British imperialism, as in India, has tried to play off one community against another and set the Jews against the Arabs. Like our own communal problem, they have sought to produce a communal problem in Palestine. So also the French Government have done in Syria. We must learn from this what the true genesis of this communal problem is in subject countries and try to remove the root cause.

It is true that at present there is ill will and conflict between the Arabs and Jews in Palestine. It is also true that a true solution will come by an understanding between them based on the freedom of the country. The Jews have been and are the victims of a cruel fascism and we must feel for their sufferings. It is a misfortune that they should allow themselves to be exploited in Palestine by British imperialism. Their future in Palestine lies in cooperation with the Arabs and in recognition of the fact that Palestine is and must continue to be essentially an Arab country. If that is admitted cooperation is easy and Jews will be welcomed in Palestine, as well as in Trans-Jordan, to help, as they are in a position to do, in the development of the country. Arabs and Jews have cooperated in the past and lived together as friends. There is no reason why they should not do so again.

For the moment the immediate issue is the fresh determination of British imperialism to crush the Arab movement. Large additional British armies are being sent to Palestine almost to conquer the country afresh. Martial law will flourish there. Our sympathies and good wishes must go out to the people of Palestine in this hour of their distress. The crushing of their movement is a blow to our nationalist strength as well as to theirs. We hang together in this world struggle for freedom.

I am aware that outrages and regrettable happenings have taken place in Palestine. We must disapprove of them for they tarnish and weaken a good cause. I also know that various feudal elements are trying to exploit the nationalist sentiment to their own advantage. But, in spite of all this, let us remember that essentially the struggle is one of Arab nationalism seeking freedom against British imperialism, and all the power of that imperialism is trying to crush it. It cannot ultimately be crushed for nationalism and the will to freedom survive.

But though we send our sympathy and good wishes to the people of Palestine, the real way to help is to play our own part worthily in our own struggle for freedom in India. That is but another, and perhaps the most important, aspect of the great struggle against world

imperialism. It is absurd for people to talk of sympathy for the Arabs, and then cooperate with British imperialism in India.

For us, therefore, the problem becomes one of carrying on our own struggle for independence. All those who stress other and smaller aspects, like the communal aspect, divert attention from the real issue. In this struggle we shall waste our energy and injure the cause if we think in terms of minor improvements with the help of that very imperialism which we seek to combat. In the Congress election manifesto this vital background of our struggle has been emphasized. This manifesto has been welcomed by the country as a whole, though there are some people who have grown angry over it. We see here the essential difference between our great organisation standing for anti-imperialism and certain principles, and others who have no clear vision and who always think in terms of individuals and petty reforms or communal favours. If the country wants freedom it has only one course open to it—to line up with the Congress. Our doors are open to all on this basis; we are not exclusive. But those who think in terms of cooperation with British imperialism have no common ground with us. They may be estimable people, as many of them are, but the question is not of individuals but of principles. And in the great world crisis that overshadows the horizon, it is essential that we should offer a strong and united front to the forces of imperialism and reaction. Only the Congress offers that front.

The Congress attitude is clear. Only in one matter—the question of accepting or not accepting office under the new constitution—is it still undecided. My own view about this has been repeatedly stated and I hold by it with the same conviction as ever. It is that we must not accept offices or ministries or else we help in working the new Act. This flows naturally from the Congress manifesto and I trust that when the time comes, this decision will be taken.

14. To the Editor, The Leader¹

Sir,

In your issue dated October 2nd you refer to the excesses committed by the left-wingers in Spain. Your authority for this statement is Senor

1. Allahabad, 2 October 1936. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L. The date 1 October 1936 given in the source is evidently incorrect. Jawaharlal is likely to have written it on 2 October before leaving for Madras. This letter was not published.

Gil Robles,² the noted fascist leader of Spain. May I venture to suggest that Herr Goebbels or General Goering are not very reliable authorities for the happenings in Germany? Nor is Senor Gil Robles to be accepted as such for Spain.

I am etc.,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. Gil Robles was a leading Catholic and royalist politician in Spain.

15. To V.K. Krishna Menon¹

December 14, 1936

My dear Krishna,

This morning I sent you a cable informing you that the Congress was willing to affiliate itself with the World Peace Congress organisation on the conditions indicated by you in your report. Your report was considered fully at the meeting of the Working Committee in Bombay last week and we decided to recommend affiliation to the Faizpur Congress. The final decision will come at Faizpur but there is no doubt that the Working Committee's recommendation will be accepted. So I am taking action on it immediately and today I am sending a letter to Dolivet, a copy of which I enclose.² This letter is full enough and I have little to add to it. You might write to him yourself and find out if he has received my letter, and if there are any lacunae you can fill them in.

There is one difficulty in our way. We are so wrapped up with the coming Congress session and the elections that it is next to impossible to do anything else. This election business will go on till the third week of February and I am going to be fully exploited for it. I shall not have a day's peace and, very probably, I shall be a physical wreck by the time it ends or earlier. So please do not expect anything wonderful to happen for some time.

On hearing from you and Dolivet I shall take steps to convene a committee to set up the peace organisations. A peace day is easy

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Not available. Dolivet was the secretary of the World Peace Congress.

enough to organise but a plebiscite is beyond our capacity for some time at least. Send us your own suggestions as to what we can do. Meanwhile you will consider yourself as representing the Congress on the R.U.P. organisation and you can address them officially on our behalf.

You have not sent us any account of your expenses incurred in attending the Brussels Congress. You are entitled to these.

In the Working Committee resolution appreciation of your work at Brussels is recorded.

Yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

16. To Raja Rao¹

December 14, 1936

My dear Raja Rao,

I got your letter some little time back. I am glad to know that you are living now in the beautiful surroundings of the Cote D'Azur. I hope your wife will get well there.

The Spanish affair is really terrible. We are far from it and naturally we do not feel the tension as you must do. But more and more people are beginning to realise how the future of the world may be affected by what is happening in Spain.

I have not so far received the issues of *La Revolution Espagnole*. I do not know what has happened to them. I should love to get this regularly.

Your account of French politics is interesting and this inside view helps one to understand what is happening. It is a strange world in which most of our preconceived notions get upset and we have to seek a new equilibrium.

The approaching Congress has brought a great deal of work to me and so I may not write at length.

With all good wishes for the new year,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

THE FAIZPUR CONGRESS

1. On the Choice of the Congress President¹

Ever since my name was mentioned for re-election to the Congress presidentship, I have thought repeatedly and anxiously over the matter. The idea did not attract me, for I do not believe in the same person functioning again and again in one office. My utility, such as it is, would not disappear if I was not President. It might possibly be greater, for I would be relieved of the routine performance of many duties which take up a great deal of time and energy.

The burden that a Congress President has to carry is no light one and his lot is not enviable. There were other colleagues and comrades fitted for the task and it seemed improper that I should in a way monopolise this seat of honour and this burden of authority. I discussed the matter with my comrades and I pressed for other names, notably that of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. But Khan Saheb was wholly unwilling and the others were also reluctant. I felt that I could not myself adopt a wholly negative attitude as there were some reasons, in the past year as in the present, which favoured me. In a way I represented a link between various sets of ideas and so I helped somewhat in toning down the differences and emphasising the essential unity of our struggle against imperialism. So, undecided, I could say neither yes nor no definitely and I remained silent on this issue, leaving chance to decide it. Nominations for the presidentship have now been made and as the time for election draws near, I feel that I cannot remain silent any longer and I must tell my countrymen what my feelings are.

I shall gladly welcome the election of any of my colleagues and co-operate with him in another capacity in the great enterprise we have undertaken. Should however the choice of my countrymen fall on me, I dare not say no to it; I shall submit to their pleasure. But before they so decide, they must realise fully what I stand for, what thoughts move me, what the springs of action are for me in speech and writing. I have given enough indication of this and from this I want to be judged.

I am not an unknown quantity and I do not want to be accepted under any false pretences. When I returned from Europe last March I came as one long cut off from political activity, without the living

1. Statement to the press, Bareilly, 20 November 1936. *The Hindu*, 21 November 1936. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 64-68.

touch with events which is so necessary for those who dabble in public affairs. Yet I had the advantage of a period of quiet thought, detached from the day to day worries of a political life. I ventured to place these thoughts of mine before my countrymen at the last session of the Congress. Since then, during a crowded eight months, I have picked up the old threads, resumed contact with the many-sided life of India, met innumerable comrades of mine, wandered about a great deal over this great land of ours, and looked into the eyes of millions of my countrymen and countrywomen. And so I have been able to form some idea of India as she is today; I have filled in that picture which had grown a little vague.

This further knowledge has not made me change in any way those views of mine which I expressed at Lucknow. It has but confirmed them. I see the world in the grip of a titanic conflict, of which our own struggle is but a part.

I see the old order breaking up; capitalism having fulfilled its purpose, decaying; and imperialism, its latest offshoot and development, entrenching itself before the onslaught of socialism and nationalism. For imperialism is but an aspect of this new capitalism and it is not possible to understand it without reference to this central fact.

In India, the outstanding fact is the appalling poverty and misery of the people and the vast and growing dimensions of unemployment. There can be no substantial relief from this under imperialism and so perforce we must have independence.

The primary issue becomes one of political freedom, though this is intimately allied to social issues, and only if this alliance is understood can effective advance be made and the right stress laid. I believe that through socialism alone can we solve our economic problems, but socialism can only function when India is politically free. Yet in that struggle for Swaraj itself the socialistic analysis helps by showing us the true nature of the struggle, its relation to the wider world struggle, and the kind of Swaraj we should aim at.

So the problem today in India is one of combating imperialism in all its aspects, and the necessity for us is to build up an anti-imperialist front for this purpose. That front must include all elements and people who desire independence, whatever their social or economic objectives might be. It must include socialists and those who are not socialists alike on this basis. The Congress itself has offered the widest basis for this joint front. We must maintain that. We may not break that front for we have to face powerful imperialist and reactionary forces. If any weaken this front, they do so at their peril and to the injury of the nation.

Our task is therefore to pool our resources, to tone down our differences as far as we can, to bear with each other even though we may differ on some matters, for ours is the larger agreement on the issue of Indian freedom and independence. We have done so in the past and built up the magnificent structure of the Congress. We shall do so in the present and in the future and so build up on an ever wider foundation this strong and united front against imperialism.

The immediate task is to combat the new Act and all its works. The Congress election manifesto has declared that there can or will be no cooperation with this Act. Let there be no weakening in this resolve and let us carry it to its logical consequence. We shall fight the elections with all our strength but we shall fight them for this and no other purpose, remembering always that the real struggle and the real strength lie outside the legislatures.

These are my present thoughts and I place them before my countrymen so that they may know how my mind is working. But over and above all this lies the shadow of international crisis and ever-impending war. We may not forget it for our fate and our future are involved in it.

2. Further Thoughts on the Presidency¹

As I was travelling from Allahabad to Bareilly I drafted a statement² in the train about the coming Congress presidential election. I was in somewhat of a quandary and not knowing what to do decided to take the public into my confidence. That statement seems to have given rise to some controversy in the press.³ As I have been incessantly touring in the interior, I have not been able to see most of the press comments and do not know what they are. Such as I have seen have surprised me for they seemed to raise issues which I had not intended to raise.

1. Statement to the press, Hargaon (Sitapur district), 28 November 1936. *The Hindu*, 29 November 1936.

2. See the preceding item.

3. It was argued by some that Jawaharlal's statement of 20 November 1936 on the subject of his re-election meant that a vote for him at the election would be a vote for socialism.

I did not wish to enter into this controversy, for I am placed in a peculiar position. I had no desire to be re-elected President and I had stated I would welcome the election of another and would gladly cooperate with him. Eminent and respected colleagues have been suggested for the presidency and election of anyone of them would be in the fitness of things. Yet under the circumstances, as I pointed out previously, I could not say "no". I have, however, just received a telegram to the following effect from two close colleagues of mine:

Newspapers interpret your statement treating your election as a vote for socialism and anti-office acceptance. We think it reiterates your own views on socialism and at the same time treating political independence as of paramount importance and pleading for joint action and your election as no vote for socialism or anti-office acceptance. Misunderstanding needs clearing.

In view of this request of my colleagues I cannot remain silent. I would add I have just heard that Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel has issued a statement on this subject.⁴ But I have not seen or heard it so far and I do not know what the exact nature of it is. The view expressed about my statement in the above telegram is perfectly correct. It would be absurd for me to treat this presidential election as a vote for socialism or anti-office acceptance. I have expressed my views on socialism and pointed out how this colours all my outlook and my activity. I have further expressed myself often enough against office acceptance and whenever opportunity occurs I shall press this viewpoint before the Congress, but it is for the Congress to decide this issue directly and on full consideration of it and not as it were by casual and indirect vote. I do believe that political independence is the paramount issue before the country and the necessity for joint, united action on this is incumbent on all of us. I say this to remove any misunderstanding and not suggest even indirectly that I should be elected. If in spite of this I am elected, it can only mean that my general line of activity during the last eight months is approved by the majority of Congressmen and not my particular views on any issue. Considerations that have led me to act in that way hold and in so far as I can, I shall continue to act in the same way whether I am President or not.

4. While admitting that on some "vital matters" his views were in conflict with those of Jawaharlal, Patel asked the delegates "to plump for Pandit Jawaharlal as being the best person to represent the nation and guide and regulate in the right channels the different forces that are at work in the country."

3. The Congress and the Elections¹

Some of you are old members of the A.I.C.C. and old associates while others are new, but old or new, we are all comrades in arms. This Congress, in connection with which we are all met here, has several special features. The first is that we meet in a village—a beautiful and fine village constructed by our friends. Hardships you may suffer during your stay in this improvised Congress Nagar, but you must not forget to take into consideration what hardships the reception committee had to suffer. A recent flood had spoiled the show first, but still this is a great achievement on the part of the reception committee.

Secondly, we have the ensuing elections to the different provincial legislatures. The Congress has set up over a thousand candidates. Several of our co-workers have been detained on account of the election campaign and have sent apologies for being absent. I wish they had been able to come, for, after all, we have to gain strength by discussions at a central place where views can be exchanged and a programme formulated.

After all, among the 1,500 candidates set up by the Congress there will be all sorts of people, good, bad and indifferent. The Central Board generally accepts the local nominations after considering the local objections. No organisation can grow unless its final decision is respected by the rank and file. I want you to carry the message back from here that threats of resignations are no good. Who dare run away from the Congress? People have resigned from the Congress organisation or held out threats to resign in protest against Parliamentary Board nominations. I was out of the Board and, after seeing what has happened during the last few months, I am glad I did not share this responsibility. I have every sympathy with Sardar Patel and Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant in their difficulties. Anybody who threatens to resign from the Congress must remember that he cannot do so and yet carry the Congress name with him. If people want to run away from the Congress, they are quite at liberty to do so, but only on this condition, that they cannot be allowed to have the benefit of the Congress label behind their name.

1. Speech at the A.I.C.C. meeting, Faizpur, 25 December 1936. *The Hindu*, 26 December 1936.

The Congress, however, is not perturbed by these. Whoever adopts an attitude of threat does not know what organisations are and has never carried on their work. Such threats reveal a poor knowledge of political affairs. The election is only one of the things that the Congress has to do. Even if the heavens fall the Congress will go on. The Congress cannot accept every suggestion made. It cannot take a decision once for all and stick to it.

The election is a heavy responsibility. Wooing the voters and serving them is our duty but the burden is great. Firstly, we have to fight those who are in alliance with the government which is bent on breaking the rules prepared by themselves in order to defeat us. You know what has happened at the various places and what will happen in the near future. Secondly, there is our own inherent weakness which we must remove.

In connection with the elections, new problems have sprung up. Some people think that success in the elections is nothing but the sharing of spoils. But I would want you to understand that the nomination of candidates is not the distribution of sweets. In nominating candidates we must make it clear that we want the real work of the candidates to continue. Although our real work is not inside the councils we may use them for whatever they be worth. Elections will come and go but the Congress will remain for ever and that is why our real and great work is outside the legislatures.

I am surprised at the suggestion which emanated from certain quarters to the effect that owing to the ensuing elections the plenary session of the Congress should be postponed. It was a preposterous suggestion for, even if the heavens were to fall, the Congress sessions cannot be postponed. I would request the delegates who have come here to attend the Congress session to explain all these to the members of district and village Congress committees.

Telegrams of protest are pouring in and augmenting the government revenues. What can I do? I am bound by the Congress constitution and every member of the Congress should try to proceed constitutionally. In view of the ensuing elections there is a growing indiscipline among the Congress ranks which must be put down. At Bombay, the Working Committee drafted disciplinary rules so that Congressmen may not fight among themselves. Otherwise our organisation will grow weaker and this is certainly not desirable.

I wanted to place these facts before you. There are other big issues besides these. The one thing I want you to bear in mind is that whatever our objective we cannot afford to weaken our organisation.

4. Message to the Nation¹

The world is in torment today and everywhere in the West as in the East there is conflict and the fate of devastating world war overshadows us. It is not a conflict of individuals but one of ideas and of vast elemental forces, which are moving millions and which clash against each other. Everything is out of joint and we seek feverishly for a new equilibrium which will fit in with existing conditions and yield peace and progress to a distracted and unhappy world. Behind the seeming complexity of international problems the underlying fact comes out. On one side are ranged the forces of progress, on the other the forces of reaction and vested interest. We in India are engrossed in our own difficulties and problems. And inevitably our own activities must lie in this sphere. But the right way to understand our own problem is to see it in proper perspective as a part of the world problem for the world today, in spite of its diversities and mutual conflicts, is a unity and must be considered as a whole. No part of it can live in isolation, cut off from the rest. With this background in view, when we consider the problem of India, we find that essentially it is the problem of removing poverty and unemployment, and the building up of the political and social order which removes all obstacles and hindrances from the path of freedom and progress. This removal involves political freedom. For without the power to shape our destiny, we are helpless victims of external forces which keep us down and exploit us. Political freedom thus becomes the primary objective without which we cannot advance materially in any direction. But behind that lies the real urge, the urgent necessity and desire to solve our problems of poverty and unemployment, to raise the standards of our millions, to remove illiteracy, to build up our industries, to get out of the iron grip of vested interests and to rid India of the numerous ills which inevitably follow foreign domination. That is a big problem, but big as it is, it is a part of the bigger world problem.

It is to the solution of this problem that the National Congress has exerted itself. And it is for this, that it has demanded the allegiance

1. Bombay, 18 May 1936. D.I.G. (C.I.D.) Maharashtra State File No. A/Misc./38/134, pp. 11-12.

This speech was recorded by the National Gramophone Manufacturing Co. Ltd., Bombay, on 18 May 1936 and released on 27 December 1936 at the time of the Faizpur Congress.

and support of the people of India. It has attached little importance to minor measures of reforms for all these are but wasted efforts when the road to real progress is barred. It has refused to be swept away by communal passions or the cries of particular groups seeking advantage at the cost of the larger good. It believes that the communal question has nothing to do with the great problem of poverty and unemployment which affects our millions. And because it has no real connection with them it is a shadow problem which will vanish at the touch of reality. The Congress stands thus for Indian freedom, it stands for the interests of the masses. It stands for great and radical changes in our economic and social system. It stands in the outside world with the forces of progress which are battling against the forces of reaction. It is the joint front in India against imperialism and its allies and satellites. All our people, to whatever group or religion or caste they might belong, have found welcome and comradeship in its widespread ranks. All Indians, whoever they might be, if they believe in these ideals and objectives and desire the freedom and progress of our well beloved country and her unhappy millions, must throw their weight on the side of the Congress and join in the gallant struggle for freedom. The present is full of misfortune and misery, and many are depressed and puzzled. But the present also offers many an opportunity for high endeavour and brave adventure for a cause that must fire the imagination of all, young and old, who have the spark of life in them and who are not afraid of risk and danger in quest of great ideals. But the present will pass—it is the future that counts. And this future beckons to us, a future bright with promise and achievement and human well-being. Who will not answer that call?

5. Presidential Address¹

Comrades,

Eight and a half months ago I addressed you from this tribune, and now, at your bidding, I am here again. I am grateful to you for this repeated expression of your confidence, deeply sensible of the love and affection that have accompanied it, somewhat overburdened by this

1. Faizpur, 27 December 1936. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 28 December 1936. Reprinted in *Eighteen Months in India*, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 69-94.

position of high honour and authority that you would have me occupy again, and yet I am fearful of this responsibility. Men and women, who have to carry the burden of responsible positions in the world today, have a heavy and unenviable task and many are unable to cope with it. In India that task is as heavy as anywhere else and if the present is full of difficulty, the veil of the future hides perhaps vaster and more intricate problems. Is it surprising then that I accept your gracious gift with hesitation?

Before we consider the problems that face us, we must give thought to our comrades—those who have left us during these past few months and those who languish year after year, often with no end in prospect, in prison and detention camp. Two well-beloved colleagues have gone—Mukhtar Ahmed Ansari and Abbas Tyabji, the bearers of names honoured in Congress history, dear to all of us as friends and comrades, brave and wise counsellors in times of difficulty.

To our comrades in prison or in detention we send greeting. Their travail continues and it grows, and only recently we have heard with horror of the suicide of three detenus² who found life intolerable for them in the fair province of Bengal, whose young men and women in such large numbers live in internment without end. We have an analogy elsewhere, in Nazi Germany where concentration camps flourish and suicides are not uncommon.

Soon after the last Congress I had to nominate the Working Committee and I included in this our comrade, Subhas Chandra Bose. But you know how he was snatched away from us on arrival at Bombay and ever since then he has been kept in internment despite failing health. Our Committee has been deprived of his counsel, and I have missed throughout the year this brave comrade on whom we all counted so much. Helplessly we watch this crushing of our men and women, but this helplessness in the present steels our resolve to end this intolerable condition of our people.

One who was not with us at Lucknow has come back to us after long internment and prison. We offer cordial welcome to Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan for his own brave self as well as for the sake of the people of the Frontier Province whom he has so effectively and gallantly led in India's struggle for freedom. But though he is with us, he may not, so the orders of the British Government in India run, go back home or enter his province or even the Punjab. And in that province of his the Congress organisation is still illegal and most political activities prevented.

2. See *ante*, p. 444.

I must also offer on your behalf warm welcome to one, who though young, is an old and well-trying soldier in India's fight for freedom. Comrade M.N. Roy has just come to us after a long and most distressing period in prison,³ but, though shaken up in body, he comes with fresh mind and heart, eager to take his part in that old struggle that knows no end till it ends in success.

The elements have been unusually cruel to us during these past few months and famine and floods and droughts have afflicted many provinces and brought great suffering to millions of our people.⁴ Recently a great cyclone descended on Guntur district in the south causing tremendous damage and rendering large numbers homeless, with all their belongings destroyed. We may not complain of this because the elements are still largely beyond human control. But the wit of man finds a remedy for recurring floods due to known causes, and makes provision for the consequences of droughts and the like, and organises adequate relief for the victims of natural catastrophes. But that wit is lacking among those who control our destinies, and our people, always living on the verge of utter destitution, can face no additional shock without going under.

We are all engrossed in India at present in the provincial elections that will take place soon. The Congress has put up over a thousand candidates and this business of election ties us in many ways, and yet I would ask you, as I did at Lucknow, to take heed of the terrible and fascinating drama of the world. Our destinies are linked up with it, and our fate, like the fate of every country, will depend on the outcome of the conflicts of rival forces and ideas that are taking place everywhere. Again I would remind you that our problem of national freedom as well as social freedom is but a part of this great world problem, and to understand ourselves we must understand others also.

Even during these last eight months vast changes have come over the international situation, the crisis deepens, the rival forces of progress and reaction come to closer grips with each other, and we go at a terrific pace towards the abyss of war. In Europe fascism has been pursuing its triumphant course, speaking ever in a more strident voice, introducing an open gangsterism in international affairs. Based as it is on hatred and violence and dreams of war, it leads inevitably, unless

3. Roy was released from Dehra Dun jail on 20 November 1936 after serving a term of six years' imprisonment in connection with the Communist Conspiracy Case at Kanpur.

4. There was famine in parts of Bengal, Bombay and Gujarat and floods in Bihar, U.P. and Assam.

it is checked in time, to world war. We have seen Abyssinia succumb to it; we see today the horror and tragedy of Spain.

How has this fascism grown so rapidly, so that now it threatens to dominate Europe and the world? To understand this one must seek a clue in British foreign policy. This policy, in spite of its outward variations and frequent hesitations, has been one of consistent support of Nazi Germany. The Anglo-German Naval Treaty threw France into the arms of Italy and led to the rape of Abyssinia.⁵ Behind all the talk of sanctions against Italy later on, there was the refusal by the British Government to impose any effective sanction. Even when the United States of America offered to cooperate in imposing the oil sanction, Britain refused, and was content to see the bombing of Ethiopians and the breaking up of the League of Nations system of collective security. True, the British Government always talked in terms of the League and in defence of collective security, but its actions belied its words and were meant to leave the field open to fascist aggression. Nazi Germany took step after step to humiliate the League and upset the European order,⁶ and ever the British 'National' Government followed meekly in its trail and gave it its whispered blessing.

Spain came then as an obvious and final test, a democratic government assailed by a fascist military rebellion aided by mercenary foreign troops. Here again while fascist powers helped the rebels, the League powers proclaimed a futile policy of non-intervention, apparently designed to prevent the Spanish democratic government from combating effectively the rebel menace.

So we find British imperialism inclining more and more towards the fascist powers,⁷ though the language it uses, as is its old habit, is democratic in texture and pious in tone. And because of this contradiction between words and deeds, British prestige has sunk in Europe and the world, and is lower today than it has ever been for many generations.

So in the world today these two great forces strive for mastery—those who labour for democratic and social freedom and those who wish to crush this freedom under imperialism and fascism. In this struggle

5. The treaty of 18 June 1935 permitted Germany to have a navy which was 35% of the naval strength of Britain. This bilateral agreement estranged France and led to a Franco-Italian agreement, which encouraged Italy to invade Abyssinia.
6. On 16 March 1935 Germany formally denounced the clauses of the Treaty of Versailles imposing disarmament on her; and on 7 March 1936 she occupied the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland.
7. After 1935, fascism came to be identified with aggression.

Britain, though certainly not the mass of the British people, inevitably joins the ranks of reaction. And the struggle today is fiercest and clearest in Spain, and on the outcome of that depends war or peace in the world in the near future, fascist domination or the scorching of fascism and imperialism. That struggle has many lessons for us, and perhaps the most important of these is the failure of the democratic process in resolving basic conflicts and introducing vital changes to bring social and economic conditions in line with world conditions. That failure is not caused by those who desire or work for these changes. They accept the democratic method, but when this method threatens to affect great vested interests and privileged classes, these classes refuse to accept the democratic process and rebel against it. For them democracy means their own domination and the protection of their special interests. When it fails to do this, they have no further use for it and try to break it up. And in their attempt to break it, they do not scruple to use any and every method, to ally themselves with foreign and anti-national forces. Calling themselves nationalists and patriots, they employ mercenary armies of foreigners to kill their own kith and kin and enslave their own people.

In Spain today our battles are being fought and we watch this struggle not merely with the sympathy of friendly outsiders, but with the painful anxiety of those who are themselves involved in it. We have seen our hopes wither and a blank despair has sometimes seized us at this tragic destruction of Spain's manhood and womanhood. But in the darkest moments the flame that symbolizes the hope of Spanish freedom has burnt brightly and proclaimed to the world its eventual triumph. So many have died, men and women, boys and girls, that the Spanish Republic may live and freedom might endure. We see in Spain, as so often elsewhere, the tragic destruction of the walls of the citadel of freedom. How often they have been lost and then retaken, how often destroyed and re-built.

I wish, and many of you will wish with me, that we could give some effective assistance to our comrades in Spain, something more than sympathy, however deeply felt. The call for help has come to us from those sorely stricken people and we cannot remain silent to that appeal. And yet I do not know what we can do in our helplessness when we are struggling ourselves against an imperialism that binds and crushes.

So I would like to stress before you, as I did before, this organic connection between world events, this action and interaction between one and the other. Thus we shall understand a little this complicated picture of the world today, a unity in spite of its amazing diversity and

conflicts. In Europe, as in the Far East, there is continuous trouble, and everywhere there is ferment. The Arab struggle against British imperialism in Palestine is as much part of this great world conflict as India's struggle for freedom. Democracy and fascism, nationalism and imperialism, socialism and a decaying capitalism, combat each other in the world of ideas, and this conflict develops on the material plane and bayonets and bombs take the place of votes in the struggle for power. Changing conditions in the world demand a new political and economic orientation and if this does not come soon, there is friction and conflict. Gradually this leads to a revolution in the minds of men and this seeks to materialise, and every delay in this change-over leads to further conflict. The existing equilibrium having gone, giving place to no other, there is deterioration, reaction, and disaster. It is this disaster that faces us in the world today and war on a terrible scale is an ever-present possibility. Except for the fascist powers every country and people dread this war and yet they all prepare for it feverishly, and in doing so they line up on this side or that. The middle groups fade out or, ghost-like, they flit about, unreal, disillusioned, self-tortured, ever-doubting. That has been the fate of the old liberalism everywhere, though in India perhaps those who call themselves liberals, and others who think in their way, have yet to come out of the fog of complacency that envelops them. But we

"Move with new desires.

For where we used to build and love

Is no man's land, and only ghosts can live

Between two fires."

What are these new desires? The wish to put an end to this mad world system which breeds war and conflict and which crushes millions; to abolish poverty and unemployment and release the energies of vast numbers of people and utilise them for the progress and betterment of humanity; to build where today we destroy.

During the past eight months I have wandered a great deal in this vast land of ours and I have seen again the throbbing agony of India's masses, the call of their eyes for relief from the terrible burdens they carry. That is our problem; all others are secondary and merely lead up to it. To solve that problem we shall have to end the imperialistic control and exploitation of India. But what is this imperialism of today? It is not merely the physical possession of one country by another; its roots lie deeper. Modern imperialism is an outgrowth of capitalism and cannot be separated from it.

It is because of this that we cannot understand our problems without understanding the implications of imperialism and socialism. The disease is deep-seated and requires a radical and revolutionary remedy and that remedy is the socialist structure of society. We do not fight for socialism in India today for we have to go far before we can act in terms of socialism, but socialism comes in here and now to help us to understand our problem and point out the path to its solution, and to tell us the real content of the Swaraj to come. With no proper understanding of the problem, our actions are likely to be erratic, purposeless and ineffective.

The Congress stands today for full democracy in India and fights for a democratic state, not for socialism. It is anti-imperialist and strives for great changes in our political and economic structure. I hope that the logic of events will lead it to socialism for that seems to me the only remedy for India's ills. But the urgent and vital problem for us today is political independence and the establishment of a democratic state. And because of this, the Congress must line up with all the progressive forces of the world and must stand for world peace. Recently there has taken place in Europe a significant development in the peace movement. The World Peace Congress, held at Brussels in September last, brought together numerous mass organisations on a common platform and gave an effective lead for peace. Whether this lead will succeed in averting war, no one can say, but all lovers of peace will welcome it and wish it success. Our Congress was ably represented at Brussels by Shri V.K. Krishna Menon and the report that he has sent us is being placed before you. I trust that the Congress will associate itself fully with the permanent peace organisation that is being built up and assist with all its strength in this great task. In doing so we must make our own position perfectly clear. For us, and we think for the world, the problem of peace cannot be separated from imperialism, and in order to remove the root causes of war, imperialism must go. We believe in the sanctity of treaties but we cannot consider ourselves bound by treaties in the making of which the people of India had no part, unless we accept them in due course. The problem of maintaining peace cannot be isolated by us, in our present condition, from war resistance. The Congress has already declared that we can be no parties to an imperialist war, and we will not allow the exploitation of India's manpower and resources for such a war. Any such attempt will be resisted by us.

The League of Nations has fallen very low and there are few who take it seriously as an instrument for the preservation of peace. India has no enthusiasm for it whatever and the Indian membership of the

League is a farce, for the selection of delegates is made by the British Government. We must work for a real League of Nations, democratically constructed, which would in effect be a League of Peoples. If even the present League, ineffective and powerless as it is, can be used in favour of peace, we shall welcome it.

With this international background in view, let us consider our national problems. The Government of India Act of 1935, the new constitution, stares at us offensively, this new charter of bondage which has been imposed upon us despite our utter rejection of it, and we are preparing to fight elections under it. Why we have entered into this election contest and how we propose to follow it up has been fully stated in the election manifesto of the All India Congress Committee, and I commend this manifesto for your adoption. We go to the legislatures not to cooperate with the apparatus of British imperialism, but to combat the Act and seek to end it, and to resist in every way British imperialism in its attempt to strengthen its hold on India and its exploitation of the Indian people. That is the basic policy of the Congress and no Congressman, no candidate for election, must forget this. Whatever we do must be within the four corners of this policy. We are not going to the legislatures to pursue the path of constitutionalism or a barren reformism.

There is a certain tendency to compromise over these elections, to seek a majority at any cost. This is a dangerous drift and must be stopped. The elections must be used to rally the masses to the Congress standard, to carry the message of the Congress to the millions of voters and non-voters alike, to press forward the mass struggle. The biggest majority in a legislature will be of little use to us if we have not got this mass movement behind us, and a majority built on compromises with reactionary groups or individuals will defeat the very purpose of the Congress.

With the effort to fight the Act and as a corollary to it, we have to stress our positive demand for a constituent assembly elected under adult suffrage. That is the very corner-stone of the Congress policy today and our election campaign must be based on it. This assembly must not be conceived as something emanating from the British Government or as a compromise with British imperialism. If it is to have any reality, it must have the will of the people behind it and the organised strength of the masses to support it, and the power to draw up the constitution of a free India. We have to create that mass support for it through these elections and later through our other activities.

The Working Committee has recommended to this Congress that a convention of all Congress members of all the legislatures, and such

other persons as the Committee might wish to add to them, should meet soon after the elections to put forward the demand for the constituent assembly, and determine how to oppose, by all feasible methods, the introduction of the federal structure of the Act. Such a convention, which must include the members of the All India Congress Committee, should help us greatly in focusing our struggle and giving it proper direction in the legislatures and outside. It will prevent the Congress members of the legislatures from developing provincialism and getting entangled in minor provincial matters. It will give them the right perspective and a sense of all-India discipline, and it should help greatly in developing mass activities on a large scale. The idea is full of big possibility and I trust that the Congress will approve of it.

Next to this demand for the constituent assembly, our most important task will be to oppose the federal structure of the Act. Utterly bad as the Act is, there is nothing so bad in it as this federation and so we must exert ourselves to the utmost to break this, and thus end the Act as a whole. To live not only under British imperialist exploitation but also under Indian feudal control, is something that we are not going to tolerate whatever the consequences. It is an interesting and instructive result of the long period of British rule in India that when, as we are told, it is trying to fade off, it should gather to itself all the reactionary and obscurantist groups in India, and endeavour to hand partial control to the feudal elements.

The development of this federal scheme is worthy of consideration. We are not against the conception of a federation. It is likely that a free India may be a federal India, though in any event there must be a great deal of unitary control. But the present federation that is being thrust upon us is a federation in bondage and under the control, politically and socially, of the most backward elements in the country.

The present Indian states took shape early in the nineteenth century in the unsettled conditions of early British rule. The treaties with their autocratic rulers, which are held up to us so often now as sacred documents which may not be touched, date from that period.

It is worthwhile comparing the state of Europe then with that of India. In Europe then there were numerous tiny kingdoms and princedoms, kings were autocratic, holy alliances and royal prerogatives flourished. Slavery was legal. During these hundred years and more Europe has changed out of recognition. As a result of numerous revolutions and changes the princedoms have gone and very few kings remain. Slavery has gone. Modern industry has spread and democratic institutions have grown up with an ever-widening franchise. These in their turn have given place in some countries to fascist dictatorships.

Backward Russia, with one mighty jump, has established a Soviet socialist state and an economic order which has resulted in tremendous progress in all directions. The world has gone on changing and hovers on the brink of yet another vast change. But not so the Indian states; they remain static in this ever-changing panorama, staring at us with the eyes of the early nineteenth century. The old treaties are sacrosanct, treaties made not with the people or their representatives but with their autocratic rulers.

This is a state of affairs which no nation, no people, can tolerate. We cannot recognise these old settlements of more than a hundred years ago as permanent and unchanging. The Indian states will have to fit into the scheme of a free India and their peoples must have, as the Congress has declared, the same personal, civil and democratic liberties as those of the rest of India.

Till recent years little was heard of the treaties of the states or of paramountcy. The rulers knew their proper places in the imperial scheme of things and the heavy hand of the British Government was always in evidence. But the growth of the national movement in India gave them a fictitious importance, for the British Government began to rely upon them more and more to help it in combating this nationalism. The rulers and their ministers were quick to notice the change in the angle of vision and to profit by it. They tried to play, not without success, the British Government and the Indian people against each other and to gain advantages from both. They have succeeded to a remarkable degree and have gained extraordinary power under the federal scheme. Having preserved themselves as autocratic units, which are wholly outside the control of the rest of India, they have gained power over other parts of India. Today we find them talking as if they were independent and laying down conditions for their adherence to the federation. There is talk even of the abolition of the viceregal paramountcy, so that these states may remain, alone in the whole world, naked and unchecked autocracies which cannot be tampered with by any constitutional means. A sinister development is the building up of the armics of some of the bigger states on an efficient basis.

Thus our opposition to the federal part of the Constitution Act is not merely a theoretical one, but a vital matter which affects our freedom struggle and our future destiny. We have got to make it a central pivot of our struggle against the Act. We have got to break this federation.

Our policy is to put an end to the Act and have a clean slate to write afresh. We are told by people who can think only in terms of action taken in the legislatures, that it is not possible to wreck it, and

there are ample provisions and safeguards to enable the government to carry on despite a hostile majority. We are well aware of these safeguards; they are one of the principal reasons why we reject the Act. We know also that there are second chambers to obstruct us. We can create constitutional crises inside the legislatures, we can have deadlocks, we can obstruct the imperialist machine, but always there is a way out. The constitution cannot be wrecked by action inside the legislatures only. For that, mass action outside is necessary, and that is why we must always remember that the essence of our freedom struggle lies in mass organisation and mass action.

The policy of the Congress in regard to the legislatures is perfectly clear; only in one matter it still remains undecided—the question of acceptance or not of office. Probably the decision of this question will be postponed till after the elections. At Lucknow I ventured to tell you that, in my opinion, acceptance of office was a negation of our policy of rejection of the Act; it was further a reversal of the policy we had adopted in 1920 and followed since then. Since Lucknow the Congress has further clarified its position in the election manifesto and declared that we are not going to the legislatures to cooperate in any way with the Act but to combat it. That limits the field of our decision in regard to offices, and those who incline to acceptance of them must demonstrate that this is the way to noncooperate with the Act, and to end it.

It seems to me that the only logical consequence of the Congress policy, as defined in our resolutions and in the election manifesto, is to have nothing to do with office and ministry. Any deviation from this would mean a reversal of that policy. It would inevitably mean a kind of partnership with British imperialism in the exploitation of the Indian people, an acquiescence, even though under protest and subject to reservations, in the basic ideas underlying the Act, an association to some extent with British imperialism in the hateful task of the repression of our advanced elements. Office acceptance on any other basis is hardly possible, and if it is possible, it will lead almost immediately to deadlock and conflict. That deadlock and impasse does not frighten us; we welcome it. But then we must think in terms of deadlocks and not in terms of carrying on with the office.

There seems to be a fear that if we do not accept office, others will do so, and they will put obstacles in the way of our freedom movement. But if we are in a majority we can prevent others from misbehaving; we can even prevent the formation of any ministry. If our majority is a doubtful one then office for us depends on compromises with non-Congress elements, a policy full of danger for our cause, and

one which would inevitably lead to our acting in direct opposition to the Congress mandate of rejection of the Act. Whether we are in a majority or in a minority, the real thing will always be the organised mass backing behind us. A majority without that backing can do little in the legislatures, even a militant minority with conscious and organised mass support can make the functioning of the Act very difficult.

We have put the constituent assembly in the forefront of our programme, as well as the fight against the federal structure. With what force can we press these two vital points and build up a mass agitation around them if we wobble over the question of office and get entangled in its web?

We have great tasks ahead, great problems to solve both in India and in the international sphere. Who can face and solve these problems in India but this great organisation of ours, which has, through fifty years' effort and sacrifice, established its unchallengeable right to speak for the millions of India? Has it not become the mirror of their hopes and desires, their urge to freedom, and the strong arm that will wrest this freedom from unwilling and resisting hands? It started in a small way with a gallant band of pioneers, but even then it represented a historic force and it drew to itself the goodwill of the Indian people. From year to year it grew, faced inner conflicts whenever it wanted to advance and was held back by some of its members. But the urge to go ahead was too great, the push from below increased, and though a few left us, unable to adjust themselves to changing conditions, vast numbers of others joined the Congress. It became a great propaganda machine dominating the public platform of India. But it was an amorphous mass and its organisational side was weak, and effective action on a large scale was beyond its powers. The coming of Gandhiji brought the peasant masses to the Congress, and the new constitution that was adopted at his instance in Nagpur in 1920 tightened up the organisation, limited the number of delegates according to population, and gave it strength and capacity for joint and effective action. That action followed soon after on a countrywide scale and was repeated in later years. But the very success and prestige of the Congress often drew undesirable elements to its fold and accentuated the defects of the constitution. The organisation was becoming unwieldy and slow of movement and capable of being exploited in local areas by particular groups. Two years ago radical changes were made in the constitution again at Gandhiji's instance. One of these was the fixation of the number of delegates according to membership, a change which has given a greater reality to our elections and strengthened us organisationally. But still our organisational side lags far

behind the great prestige of the Congress, and there is a tendency for our committees to function in the air, cut off from the rank and file.

It was partly to remedy this that the mass contacts resolution was passed by the Lucknow Congress, but unhappily the committee that was in charge of this matter has not reported yet. The problem is a wider one than was comprised in that resolution for it includes an overhauling of the Congress constitution with the object of making it a closer knit body, capable of disciplined and effective action. That action to be effective must be mass action, and the essence of the strength of the Congress has been this mass basis and mass response to its calls. But though that mass basis is there, it is not reflected in the organisational side, and hence an inherent weakness in our activities.

We have seen the gradual transformation of the Congress from a small upper class body to one representing the great body of the lower middle classes and later the masses of this country. As this drift to the masses continued the political role of the organisation changed and is changing, for this political role is largely determined by the economic roots of the organisation.

We are already and inevitably committed to this mass basis for without it there is no power or strength in us. We have now to bring that into line with the organisation, so as to give our primary members greater powers of initiative and control, and opportunities for day to day activities. We have, in other words, to democratise the Congress still further.

Another aspect of this problem that has been debated during the past year has been the desirability of affiliating other organisations, of peasants, workers and others, which also aim at the freedom of the Indian people, and thus to make the Congress the widest possible joint front of all the anti-imperialist forces in the country. As it is, the Congress has an extensive direct membership among these groups; probably 75 per cent of its members come from the peasantry. But it is argued that functional representation will give far greater reality to the peasants and workers in the Congress. This proposal has been resisted because of a fear that the Congress might be swamped by new elements, sometimes even politically backward elements. As a matter of fact, although this question is an important one for us, any decision of it will make little difference at present; its chief significance will be as a gesture of goodwill. For there are few well-organised workers' or peasants' unions in the country which are likely to profit by Congress affiliation. There is not the least possibility of any swamping, and, in any event, this can easily be avoided. I think that now or later some

kind of functional representation in the Congress is inevitable and desirable. It is easy for the Congress to lay down conditions for such affiliation, so as to prevent bogus and mushroom growths or undesirable organisations from profiting by it. A limit might also be placed on the number of representatives that such affiliated organisations can send. Some such recommendation, I believe, has been made by the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee.

The real object before us is to build up a powerful joint front of all the anti-imperialist forces in the country. The Congress has indeed been in the past, and is today, such a united popular front, and inevitably the Congress must be the basis and pivot of united action. The active participation of the organised workers and peasants in such a front would add to its strength and must be welcomed. Cooperation between them and the Congress organisation has been growing and has been a marked feature of the past year. This tendency must be encouraged. The most urgent and vital need of India today is this united national front of all forces and elements that are ranged against imperialism. Within the Congress itself most of these forces are represented, and in spite of their diversity and difference in outlook, they have cooperated and worked together for the common good. That is a healthy sign both of the vitality of our great movement and the unity that binds it together. The basis of it is anti-imperialism and independence. Its immediate demand is for a constituent assembly leading to a democratic state where political power has been transferred to the mass of the people. An inevitable consequence of this is the withdrawal of the alien army of occupation.

These are the objectives before us, but we cannot ignore the present-day realities and the day to day problems of our people. These ever-present realities are the poverty and unemployment of our millions, appalling poverty and an unemployment which has even the middle classes in its grip and grows like a creeping paralysis. The world is full of painful contrasts today, but surely nowhere else are these contrasts so astounding as in India. Imperial Delhi stands as the visible symbol of British power, with all its pomp and circumstance and vulgar ostentation and wasteful extravagance; and within a few miles of it are the mud huts of India's starving peasantry, out of whose meagre earnings these great palaces have been built, huge salaries and allowances paid. The ruler of a state flaunts his palaces and his luxury before his wretched and miserable subjects, and talks of his treaties and his inherent right to autocracy. And the new Act and constitution have come to us to preserve and perpetuate these contrasts, to make India safe for autocracy and imperialist exploitation.

As I write, a great railway strike is in progress.⁸ For long the world of railway workers has been in ferment because of retrenchment and reduction in wages and against them is the whole power of the state. Some time ago there was a heroic strike in the Ambernath Match Factory near Bombay, owned by a great foreign trust.⁹ But behind that trust and supporting it we saw the apparatus of government functioning in the most extraordinary way. The workers in our country have yet to gain elementary rights; they have yet to have an eight-hour day and unemployment insurance and a guaranteed living wage.

But a vaster and more pressing problem is that of the peasantry, for India is essentially a land of the peasants. In recognition of this fact, and to bring the Congress nearer to the peasant masses, we are meeting here today at the village of Faizpur and not, as of old, in some great city. The Lucknow Congress laid stress on this land problem and called on the provincial committees to frame agrarian programmes. This work is still incomplete for the vastness and intricacy of it has demanded full investigation. But the urgency of the problem calls for immediate solution. Demands for radical reforms in the rent and revenue and the abolition of feudal levies have been made from most of the provinces. The crushing burden of debt on the agricultural classes has led to a widespread cry for a moratorium and a substantial liquidation of debt. In the Punjab *karza* (debt) committees have grown up to protect the peasantry. All these and many other demands are insistently made and vast gatherings of peasants testify to their inability to carry their present burdens. Yet it is highly doubtful if this problem can be solved piecemeal and without changing completely the land system. That land system cannot endure; an obvious step is to remove the intermediaries between the cultivator and the state. Cooperative or collective farming must follow.

The reform of the land system is tied up with the development of industry, both large-scale and cottage, in order to give work to our scores of millions of the unemployed and raise the pitiful standards of our people. That again is connected with so many other things—education, housing, roads and transport, sanitation, medical relief, social services, etc. Industry cannot expand properly because of the economic and

8. The dismissal of 827 men for refusal to be transferred on lower rates of pay led to a strike for 60 days on the Bengal Nagpur Railway.

9. The strike was for the restoration of a reduction in wages and recognition of the workers' union. The factory was owned by the Swedish Match Company.

financial policy of the government which, in the name of Imperial Preference, encourages British manufacturers in India, and works for the profit of Big Finance in the City of London. The currency ratio continues in spite of persistent Indian protest; gold has been pouring out of India continuously now for five years at a prodigious rate, though all India vehemently opposes this overflow. And the new Act tells us that we may do nothing which the Viceroy or the Governor might consider as an unfair discrimination against British trade or commercial interests. The old order may yield place to the new but British interests are safe and secure.

And so one problem runs into another and all together form that vast complex that is India today. Are we going to solve this by petty tinkering and patchwork with all manner of vested interests obstructing us and preventing advance? Only a great planned system for the whole land and dealing with all these various national activities, coordinating them, making each serve the larger whole and the interests of the mass of our people, only such a planned system with a vision and courage to back it, can find a solution. But planned systems do not flourish under the shadow of monopolies and vested interests and imperialist exploitation. They require the air and soil of political and social freedom.

These are distant goals for us today though the rapid march of events may bring us face to face with them sooner than we imagine. The immediate goal—*independence*—is nearer and more definite, and that is why perhaps we escape, to a large extent, that tragic disillusion and hopelessness which affect so many in Europe.

We are apparently weak, not really so. We grow in strength, the empire of Britain fades away. Because we are politically and economically crushed, our civil liberties taken away, hundreds of our organisations made illegal, thousands of our young men and women always kept in prison or in detention camp, our movements continually watched by hordes of secret servicemen and informers, our spoken word taken down lest it offend the law of sedition, because of all this and more we are not weaker but stronger, for all this intense repression is the measure of our growing national strength. War and revolution dominate the world and nations arm desperately. If war comes or other great crisis, India's attitude will make a difference. We hold the keys of success in our hands if we but turn them rightly. And is it the increasing realisation of this that has swept away the defeatist mentality of our people?

Meanwhile the general election claims our attention and absorbs our energy. Here too we find official interference, in spite of denial, and

significant attempts to prevent secrecy of voting in the case of illiterate voters. The United Provinces have been singled out for this purpose and the system of coloured boxes, which will be used everywhere else, has been ruled out for the U.P. But we shall win in these elections in spite of all the odds—state pressure, vested interest, money.

That will be but a little step in a long journey, and we shall march on, with danger and distress as companions. We have long had these for our fellow travellers and we have grown used to them and when we have learnt how to dominate them we shall also know how to dominate success.

6. Concluding Address¹

During the last two days you have seen much. You have heard me much. Still I stand here for the last time. Whatever Babu Rajendra Prasad and Mr. Aney have said about the organizers here, I join in the tributes paid to them. Theirs was a heavy responsibility and they have discharged it in a magnificent manner. Their workers showed a remarkable spirit of cooperation and steadfast devotion to duty. There is nothing impossible for us. We have the key to Swaraj with us. It cannot be snatched away by any foreign power. But when we are disunited they take advantage. You have come here in lakhs to the Congress and the exhibition and everyone of you can bear testimony to the stupendous task that the workers were faced with.

Babu Rajendra Prasad and Mr. Aney love me. You brothers and sisters, all of you love me and tolerate me. A few months ago somebody said that I am the spoilt child of the Congress and will wreck the Congress and the country.² I had thought that this conclusion may be wrong, for I have never wrecked anybody, but he is right in thinking that I am the spoilt child of the Congress. By your love and showers of praise you add to my pride. You lift me high because you talk so highly about me. That is not good. We should not shower too much praise on each other. You do not consider how we or my

1. Faizpur, 28 December 1936. *The Hindustan Times*, 30 December 1936.

2. The reference is to Cowasji Jehangir's election speech at Poona on 29 August 1936.

predecessors reached this high pedestal of glory. We are small men. We had our own qualities and defects. But chance had it that we joined the huge task and came under the banner of a great leader. This was a huge responsibility and involved the destinies of thousands and meant life and death for many. The power which we had was derived from all of you—from your love and devotion. This power is yours and this greatness is bestowed by you. If you withdraw your support, if you withdraw your blessings, the man will become weak and fall.

Our greatest leader, Gandhiji, came to our country. That was our good luck. But not even the biggest leader can accomplish this stupendous task. In this struggle we all went forward. Our strength was the strength which our army gave us and which increased daily. You must not forget the army of workers which has contributed to our greatness. You have seen in this Congress, whether it was a tamasha or not. People came from all corners of the country. Why did they come from the far off Frontier and Cape Comorin? They did not come for comforts, for there is no comfort here. Why do all sorts of people gather, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and others? Why do we meet and disperse? Is this due to love for each other? What brings you here—drags you here? That is what gives us power and contributes to our success. We are all delegates and visitors, friends and comrades. I was amazed at the way that you sat here, calm and mannerly. A few people can disturb a big assembly but here, in spite of the vast crowd, the work went on smoothly. This power of quiet and patient work can solve our problems. We have enough power. We want united effort. Now you return to your homes in different directions, but we will not be separated because our goal will bind us together. We are soldiers on the same battlefield. In all places and phases of the Indian struggle, in bazaars and factories, we all meet. Our relationship cannot break. I take leave of you, but what is this leave-taking when we have to join together and march forward?

7. Selection of the Working Committee¹

In regard to the appointment of the Working Committee I have long felt that the existing rule was not the proper rule wholly, because it

1. Speech at the A.I.C.C., Faizpur, 29 December 1936. *The Hindu*, 30 December 1936.

gave too much power to the President. With all becoming humility and modesty, I say, you may not always have such a president as I am. What I mean to say is that he may not be so greatly amenable to your wishes as I am.

Suppose by an odd chance you elect a President who may be capable in many ways, who may be obstinate and pigheaded and may not appoint a Working Committee immediately or does not bring it for long to a meeting of the All India Congress Committee. Under the new constitution there is little to prevent him doing so. Of course there may be a requisition meeting. But there are innumerable ways of his obstructing and delaying and carrying on for months almost autocratically. Although some of us may be temperamentally autocratic, it is bad in the constitution to encourage this. On the other hand there is this difficulty. If we leave it to election it becomes very difficult to get anything like a compact, homogeneous and harmonious Committee. Therefore, there also I felt a difficulty and this idea ought to be left out. Now, my own idea is that the President should continue to nominate the Working Committee but, immediately after his nomination, it should be placed before the All India Congress Committee for information—not for confirmation. Of course, if necessary, they can kick out the whole body. When the new cabinet is appointed, if it appears that as a whole they cannot approve of it, they can kick it out. I think some change of this kind can be done in regard to the Congress constitution. I thought it my duty to leave the matter to the constitution committee. But, as I remained vested with authority with regard to the appointment of the Working Committee, whatever I did, I thought I must not postpone it till after the meeting of the All India Congress Committee.

I want to say I have considered all various difficulties and it is also a fact that some persons whom I would like are not here. Many provinces are not properly represented and some provinces are over-represented. All this is true and one gets so little time to consider all these things at the time of the Congress. However, I considered these matters and I consulted my colleagues and ultimately came to the decision that the existing Committee should continue to function as it is, with this variation that I should extend the old practice of inviting people who are not members but interested and we will consult them and they will take part in our deliberation, though not as members. Of course, on particular occasions particular individuals may be invited.

I have become a convert to this idea of a village Congress. I was not enamoured of the village Congress sessions though our touch with the village has been living. I do not mean to say that all Congress sessions

should always be held in villages. But, having seen what I have seen here—not so much the arrangement part, although, having regard to difficulties it was remarkable, and I think Shankerrao Deo² and his colleagues deserve our warmest congratulations—I have become a convert to the village Congress.

I may relate a story. A short while before the Congress when a storm came here and there was knee-deep mud and there was no trace left of the preparations for the Congress, Mr. K. F. Nariman came here and he was struck that anyone could think of holding the Congress here and he said to Mr. Shankerrao Deo, "You better get away from here". But Mr. Shankerrao said, "Even so the Congress is going to be held here—mud or no mud."

Then Mr. Nariman asked, "But how will you get water in this place?" Mr Shankerrao said that even if there was no water he would get a million bottles of soda water but the Congress would be held here. That is a spirit which is admirable—'admirable' is rather a weak word for it.

Apart from the arrangements the thing that struck me was the vast influence that the village Congress must have not only on the neighbouring areas but on the neighbouring provinces. People coming from vast areas have fresh minds and a fresh heart and they carry back sparks of living fire. It is a tremendous thing.

2. (1894-1974); a leading Congressman of Maharashtra; member, Congress Working Committee, 1938-50; member, Constituent Assembly, 1946-50; later joined the Sarvodaya movement.

8. On the Success of the Congress Session¹

This Congress has been a splendid success. It has demonstrated the unity of the Indian people in the great fight for independence.

It has shown that, though we may differ in our outlook or viewpoint, we are all at one in our desire to pull together.

It has been a magnificent demonstration of the joint front about which we hear so much. The Congress is this joint front in India and

1. Statement to the press, Faizpur, 29 December 1936. *The Bombay Chronicle*, 30 December 1936.

all who desire Indian independence have no alternative but to work for it within the ranks of the Congress.

We got through a great deal of work, but all this was done expeditiously and in a business-like manner. It was remarkable to see the goodwill and comradeship that prevailed during all our discussions and the desire to stress always the main points of agreement rather than differences.

To many of us who doubted the feasibility of holding the Congress in a village, this has been an eye-opener.

From the point of view of Indian humanity this has been probably the biggest Congress ever held.

It was not only big. It consisted of an earnest and disciplined people gathered together to hear the message of the Congress and to carry it to the distant parts of India.

The flame that we lighted at Faizpur will shed its radiance not only in the rural and urban areas of Maharashtra but all over India, and scores of thousands of men and women who gathered here will carry sparks of it to light the fire of independence in the innumerable villages and towns of India.

MISCELLANEOUS



AT THE FAIZPUR CONGRESS, DECEMBER 1936



AT THE FAIZPUR CONGRESS, DECEMBER 1936

1. To T.R. Deogirikar¹

Allahabad
March 26, 1936

Dear Mr. Deogirikar,²

I have received your letter of the 12th March only today on my return from Delhi. A few days ago someone else drew my attention to the criticisms in the Maharashtra press on my remarks about Shivaji meeting Afzal Khan.³ Previous to that I did not know anything about it. I am very glad that you have written to me on this subject and given me extracts from books which go to show that my statement was wrong. This is a matter of special pleasure to me as I have always been distressed at the thought that Shivaji should have been accused of improper behaviour. As that doubt has been removed from my mind now, I feel happier.

As for my book, you must realise that it was written in prison, without reference books or authorities. Very largely I had to rely on my memory or my notes of odd events. It was inevitable that serious mistakes should creep into such a book. I could not possibly be very scholarly or accurate. I have been looking forward to friends to point out these mistakes to me so that I can correct them in a future edition.

The book, as you know, covers a vast field and I do not presume to have studied in any detail the whole course of human history. I have tried to understand the main forces and have laid stress on them; for minor incidents I had to rely on my memory of what I had read long ago from books mostly written by foreigners. I can quite understand friends in Maharashtra resenting what I had written about Shivaji, incorrect as it was, but I wish they had given me a chance to correct

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (b. 1896); editor of Marathi journal, *Chitramaya Jagat*, for many years; leading Congressman of Maharashtra; member, Rajya Sabha, 1950-62.

3. Jawaharlal had written in *Glimpses of World History*: "With his (Shivaji's) enemies he was prepared to adopt any means, good or bad, provided that he gained his end. He killed a general sent against him by Bijapur by treachery ... Some of Shivaji's deeds, like the treacherous killing of the Bijapur general, lower him greatly in our estimation." These sentences started a controversy in the Bombay press. Deogirikar in his letter had referred Jawaharlal to Jadunath Sarkar's contention that Afzal Khan had wanted to murder Shivaji but had been outwitted by him.

myself. Now that this has been done I gladly acknowledge the error and shall correct it when the occasion arises for issuing a new edition.

You can give publicity to this letter or extracts from this letter if you so wish.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. To Sri Prakasa¹

Lucknow
3.5.36

My dear Prakasa,

Thank you for your letter which Narendra Deva gave me. I am glad you wrote and thus gave me an opportunity to say something about an incident² which I had completely forgotten. I wish you had come yourself, for a talk is often more satisfactory.

Like you, many things and persons and groups in India at present oppress me. But my reaction to them is somewhat different from yours. It is an aggressive reaction and often an impertinent and undignified one. The mere fact that conditions became adverse and individuals lukewarm makes me feel more combative. I have not undertaken this job to please others or because of others but because I have felt a strong urge to do so. All my intellect pushes me in that direction, so also my emotions and pride. I have tried to cultivate the 'long view' in which our present disorders lose their importance and take a very secondary place. This helps me in retaining a measure of calm and to see things in proper perspective. But the personal difficulty remains and the conflict with others who do not take this long view. This is heightened by the fact that I have had to go through during the last many months a severe mental strain which becomes obvious enough to others on occasions.

1. Sri Prakasa Papers, N.M.M.L.

2. Sri Prakasa complained about an incident at the Lucknow session of the Congress, when Jawaharlal jumped from the rostrum to deal with some Sanatanists who were creating a disturbance; when Sri Prakasa sought to accompany him, Jawaharlal pushed him aside, saying "Go to hell, you Benares people."

That is the background which I should like you to bear in mind when considering my unfortunate self. Then there is today, I feel, a severe tug-of-war in India between rival ideologies. This is partly apparent and partly hidden but is important. I find myself very much on the side of one ideology and I am distressed at some of my colleagues going the other way.

I have no clear recollection of what I said during the Congress on the occasion you mention. Your memory of it must be right. But perhaps you attach more importance to damns and hells than they deserve. They have become excessively common in modern English, and especially American speech, and have little significance. I am afraid that I have fallen a victim to these new-fangled uses. But the fact remains that my temper has become of the shortest and I frequently misbehave. An apology for it is no doubt desirable but I want to find even more an explanation for it. I wonder if you can glimpse any explanation in what I have written above. You know anyhow that I could not mean that silly remark for you, or indeed for anyone. But the irritation within me and the over-wrought nerves sought a way out and that was a result.

I write hurriedly and perhaps do not make myself clear. But I think you will understand and, understanding, forgive.

I do not understand you when you say that you want to have a rest from politics. How can any of us escape from these toils?

Love,

Yours affly.,
Jawaharlal

3. On the Training of Volunteers¹

Allahabad
6.5.1936

Dear Comrade,

I am addressing you on the subject of volunteer organisation. The question comes up annually at the time of the Congress session, as well as in the course of our many activities which demand the presence of

1. Circular to the provincial Congress committees. A.I.C.C. File No. P-1/1936, p. 163, N.M.M.L.

The value of the communication can be gauged by such gentle charges lovingly made: that the Congress buys its votes at the elections, and that it blackmails people and classes and then ruins them. Such malicious falsehoods are so patently absurd that they do little harm, but for newspapers and others to encourage them inevitably involves some deterioration in public life. There are certain standards of public work which we forsake at our peril, and it might be desirable even for your anonymous correspondent to remember them.

I do not know if your correspondent J has opened a central office or an enquiry bureau where "reports" ceaselessly "arrive from all parts of India about the deplorable state of Congress finances". Certainly I did not know that "the Congress budget at this moment shows a deficit of nearly two lakhs of rupees", and far from the Lucknow Congress having "proved a fiasco or financial tragedy", my information is that it did rather well and there is no deficit at all. But even if there were deficits why should J worry about them? We would err in the most distinguished company with great countries and powers. We have, I believe, always met all our liabilities, unlike rich and powerful countries like England which refuses to pay its international debts.³

I do not know who the people are who are said to be "clamouring" for an enquiry into the Tilak Swaraj Fund. I have not heard of them. I know something about that fund owing to my long association with the office of the A.I.C.C., and knowing something also about public and party funds in England and other foreign countries, I can say with confidence that the Tilak Swaraj Fund has been more carefully accounted for and audited at every stage than such funds are elsewhere. The fullest publicity has been given to it in the newspapers and in our monthly and annual audited accounts. It is remarkable that in spite of years of conflict with the government, when our books and papers were largely in government possession, we have succeeded in keeping proper accounts and treating the funds entrusted to us by our friends with the care that public funds deserve. The Congress has thousands of committees; it is a vast organisation. It has had to face terrible repression and the opposition of a powerful government. It may be that in some local committees there have been errors and some waste during abnormal times. But as a whole, and in so far as the central headquarters are concerned, there has been astonishingly little waste.

If J or any of his friends are so interested in our accounts and expenditure, I would suggest to them to subscribe to the *Congress Bulletin* issued by the A.I.C.C. office (annual subscription: Rs. 2/-). This will

3. See *ante*, section 4, item 49.

have the additional advantage of keeping them informed of Congress politics and prevent them, I hope, from making the very foolish and inept statements that J's letter abounds in.

Jawaharlal Nehru

6. To Indranarayan Sen Gupta¹

May 9, 1936

Dear Mr. Sen Gupta,²

Thank you for your letter.³ I am grieved to learn of the famine condition in the Burdwan and Presidency divisions as well as in other parts of Bengal. It seems to me that we can do really little to relieve this permanent distress of our people without changing the whole structure of government as well as the agrarian system. Hence the necessity for a radical agrarian programme. I hope the programme that you draw up will really deal with the causes that underlie these famines and perpetual scarcity. A strong and definite programme on the basis of which propaganda is carried on will in itself bring great pressure on the government. Tinkering with the present conditions will not help.

It would be an excellent thing if you could send a competent committee of inquiry to the famine areas to report objectively what the economic conditions are. The inquiry should be detailed and should give facts and figures. Meanwhile I hope that the Bengal press will give sufficient publicity to these conditions of famine.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-25/1936, p. 115, N.M.M.L.

2. President of the Bengal Congress Nationalist Party in 1935; active participant in the civil disobedience movements.

3. Acute famine conditions had been reported from Presidency divisions and some districts of north and east Bengal and Sen Gupta urged Jawaharlal to advise him on how to tackle the problem.

7. To Rajendra Prasad¹

May 13, 1936

My dear Rajendra Babu,

I have just received your long letter of the 10th about the Bengal dispute.² I have already written to you and requested you—as indeed the A.I.C.C. has done—to take full charge of this matter and decide it as you think proper.³ If I may suggest one thing, the consideration of the problem need not necessarily be one of the full legal type with all the tricks and hoodwinkings that our past experience unfortunately reminds us of. This kind of thing should be definitely discouraged though perhaps it may not be possible to avoid it altogether.

As for the intervening period, before fresh elections are held, obviously there must be some authority. There cannot and should not be a gap. In spite of the difficulty of having a partially constituted B.P.C.C. functioning for this period I can see no other way out. This is not a nominated committee, but a partially elected committee. If it represents even half the province, it should, I think, function. The real way out of the difficulty is to have the elections held as soon as possible and to prevent the tactics of delay. I do not see why it should take months to scrutinise the list of members or to decide about future elections.⁴

This whole Bengal affair is, you will agree with me, almost a nightmare and very selfishly I am casting the burden on you. The way out of it will have to be not by interminable legal arguments nor by nominations and pacts but by some kind of elections however imperfect they might be. The sooner these are held the better.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, File No. III/36, National Archives of India.
2. He had sought Jawaharlal's "advice and guidance" whether the "provisional nominated" B.P.C.C. should be allowed to function pending the settlement of election disputes.
3. The A.I.C.C. at its meeting on 15 April 1936 had authorised Rajendra Prasad to continue to deal with Bengal disputes.
4. Some Congressmen in Bengal had demanded fresh elections of thirty delegates, and Rajendra Prasad had written that this would mean "elections in nearly half the province" and that it would take "months and months" to scrutinise the lists of the primary members in the disputed districts.

8. Democratic Functioning of the Congress¹

Allahabad
May 14, 1936

Dear Comrade,

I venture to write to you and to seek your cooperation, as well as the cooperation of your committee, in a matter which seems to me of some importance. I receive from time to time complaints from individual members of P.C.Cs, or from a group of members, against another group or an office bearer. Often we are asked to give our decisions on highly technical interpretations of our own constitution or of the P.C.C. constitutions. We welcome as a rule communications from Congressmen generally and we are always happy to be of service to them in any matter. And if legal interpretations are demanded of me, I shall certainly give them, however much I might dislike this job and however rusty my knowledge of law might be. But I do not fancy this work and I should like to discourage, if I may, the preoccupation of Congressmen with legal quibbles and the like. Life is short and we have big work ahead and the less we waste our time on petty disputes the better. I can understand conflicts of opinion on matters of principle and it is right that in a living and vital organisation like the Congress there should be such conflicts. But the way to resolve them democratically is to place our viewpoints before our larger committees and to abide by their decisions. For this purpose it is desirable for the full P.C.C. to meet frequently. There has been a tendency to avoid or postpone P.C.C. meetings because of the cost of travelling or other reasons. Usually the executive council decides many major issues or sometimes the office bearers do so.

This is an undesirable tendency and it leads to authoritarianism and a weakening of the democratic element. Personally I feel, and the Lucknow Congress has emphasized this, that if we desire to draw life and strength from the masses, we must develop the political life of our primary committees and go to them frequently for consultation and direction. This direction must come much more from below than from above. Otherwise we lose touch with the living elements and function increasingly in small committees in the air.

An office bearer, as I conceive his duties, has no special powers except to carry out the directions of his committee. If the committee does not

1. Circular letter to the secretaries of the provincial Congress committees. A.I.C.C. File No. P-1/1936, pp. 153-155, N.M.M.L.

meet frequently the office bearer inevitably begins to function as a committee and authoritarianism grows. And this leads to an unhealthy desire to hold office and exercise the power that it is supposed to give. Why should office give any special power? The office of a president of the A.I.C.C. or of a P.C.C. is a high one, but apart from the honour and glory, there is no reason why it should confer any power on the individual concerned.

I think therefore that office bearers, apart from the duties of their office, should act more as members of their committee than as specially favoured mortals above the common lot of Congress members. Thus only will we encourage democracy and discourage authoritarianism. Where any dispute arises it is for the committee to decide and the decision of the P.C.C. should end the dispute. There should be no reference, except in very exceptional matters, to the A.I.C.C. or to its President. The President, however, will welcome communications on matters of policy and principle and the work we have to do.

Perhaps you will be good enough to place this letter before the members of your P.C.C. as well as to send copies of it to your local committees.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

9. To V. K. Krishna Menon¹

Allahabad
May 25, 1936

My dear Krishna,

...We have formally started this department² and put it under the charge of Dr. R. Lohia, a bright and earnest young man with a Berlin Ph.D. Inevitably we have to go slow to begin with as there is so much to be done. But I think we shall be able to do some good work. We propose to develop contacts with all and sundry to begin with. The nature of these contacts will vary with the individuals or groups concerned.

We have also started in the Congress office a separate political and economic department in charge of Dr. Mohammed Ashraf whom perhaps you know. This department has an ambitious programme of not

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L. Extracts.

2. The foreign department of the Congress.

only collecting data but preparing monographs, issuing pamphlets, etc. Ultimately it might even undertake field surveys.

Do you remember our talk about the publication of a series of small books dealing with Indian problems, chiefly economic? Is there any possibility of some such thing being done at your end? Some people have been discussing it here as the need for such books is keenly felt. Let me know whether you propose to do anything. Suppose we can get some such books written here, could we get them published in England?

You can have a faint idea of what I had to go through in Bombay by referring to *The Bombay Chronicle* of those days. It was almost as bad as the London paper after the King's death. I am now here for three days only at the end of which I go to the Punjab for a week. It is the hottest time of the year there. So I have something to look forward to.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

10. Before India is Reborn¹

Indians and Englishmen are, I am afraid, likely to disagree about the record of British rule in India. That is perhaps natural, but it does come as a shock when high British officials, including Secretaries of State for India, draw fanciful pictures of India's past and present and make statements which have no basis in fact. It is quite extraordinary how ignorant English people, outside some experts and others, are about India. If facts elude them, how much more is the spirit of India beyond their reach? They seized her body and possessed her, but it was the possession of violence. They did not know her or try to know her. They never looked into her eyes; for theirs were averted and hers downcast through shame and humiliation. After centuries of contact they face each other, strangers still, full of dislike for each other.

And yet India with all her poverty and degradation had enough of nobility and greatness about her, and though she was overburdened with ancient tradition and present misery, and her eyelids were a little weary,

1. Article published in *Asia* (New York), June 1936.

she had "a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions". Behind and within her battered body one could still glimpse a majesty of soul. Through long ages she had travelled and gathered much wisdom on the way, and trafficked with strangers and added them to her own big family, and witnessed days of glory and of decay, and suffered humiliation and terrible sorrow, and seen many a strange sight; but throughout her long journey she had clung to her immemorial culture, drawn strength and vitality from it, and shared it with other lands. Like a pendulum she had swung up and down; she had ventured with the daring of her thought to reach up to the heavens and unravel their mystery, and she had also had bitter experience of the pit of hell. Despite the woeful accumulations of superstition and degrading custom that had clung to her and borne her down, she had never wholly forgotten the inspiration that some of the wisest of her children, at the dawn of history, had given her in the *upanishads*. The keen minds, ever restless and ever striving and exploring, had not sought refuge in blind dogma or grown complacent in the routine observance of dead forms or ritual and creed. They had demanded not a personal relief from suffering in the present or a place in a paradise to come, but light and understanding: "Lead me from the unreal to the real, lead me from darkness to light, lead me from death to immortality," as the *Brihadaranyak Upanishad*² expresses it. In the most famous of the prayers recited daily even today by millions, the *gayatri mantra*,³ the call is for knowledge, for enlightenment.

Though often broken up politically India's spirit always guarded a common heritage, and in her diversity there was ever an amazing unity. Like all ancient lands she was a curious mixture of the good and bad, but the good was hidden and had to be sought after, while the odour of decay was evident and her hot, pitiless sun gave full publicity to the bad.

There is some similarity between Italy and India. Both are ancient countries with long traditions of culture behind them, though Italy is a newcomer compared to India, and India is a much vaster country. Both were split up politically, and yet the conception of *Italia*, like that of India, never died, and in all their diversity the unity was predominant. In Italy the unity was largely a Roman unity; for that great city had

2. One of the 18 prominent *upanishads*.

3. An English rendering of this Vedic hymn transcribed by Jawaharlal in his notebooks, is: "Om! Hail to the regions of the earth, air, and the heavens! We meditate on the glorious effulgence of the divine sun. May he stimulate and direct our intelligence!"

dominated the country and been the fount and symbol of unity. In India there was no such single centre or dominant city, although Benares might well be called the eternal city of the East, not only for India but also for eastern Asia. But, unlike Rome, Benares never dabbled in empire or thought of temporal power. Indian culture was so widespread all over India that no part of the country could be called the heart of that culture. From Cape Comorin to Amarnath and Badrinath in the Himalaya, from Dwarka to Puri, the same ideas coursed, and, if there was a clash of ideas in one place, the noise of it soon reached distant parts of the country.

Just as Italy gave the gift of culture and religion to western Europe, India did so to eastern Asia, though China was as old and venerable as India. And, even when Italy was lying prostrate politically, her life coursed through the veins of Europe.

It was Metternich⁴ who called Italy a "geographical expression", and many a would-be Metternich has used that phrase for India; and, strangely enough, there is a similarity even in their geographical positions in the two continents. More interesting is the comparison of England with Metternich's Austria; for has not England of the twentieth century been compared to Austria of the nineteenth, proud and haughty and imposing still, but with the roots that gave strength shrivelling up and decay eating its way into the mighty fabric?

It is curious how one cannot resist the tendency to give an anthropomorphic form to a country. Such is the force of habit and early associations. India becomes *Bharat Mata*, Mother India, a beautiful lady, very old but ever youthful in appearance, sad-eyed and forlorn, cruelly treated by aliens and outsiders, and calling upon her children to protect her. Some such picture rouses the emotions of hundreds of thousands and drives them to action and sacrifice. And yet India is in the main the peasant and the worker, not beautiful to look at, for poverty is not beautiful. Does the beautiful lady of our imaginations represent the bare-bodied and bent workers in the fields and factories? Or the small group of those who have from ages past crushed the masses and exploited them, imposed cruel customs on them and made many of them even untouchable? We seek to cover truth by the creatures of our imaginations and endeavour to escape from reality to a world of dreams.

And yet despite these different classes and their mutual conflicts there was a common bond which united them in India, and one is amazed

4. Count Metternich (1773-1859); Austrian diplomat and Foreign Minister, 1809-1848 and the arch-leader of European reaction.

at its persistence and tenacity and enduring vitality. What was this strength due to? Not merely the passive strength and weight of inertia and tradition, great as these always are. There was an active sustaining principle; for it resisted successfully powerful outside influences and absorbed internal forces that rose to combat it. And yet with all its strength it could not preserve political freedom or endeavour to bring about political unity. It did not seem to think them worth taking much trouble about. Very foolishly it ignored their importance and suffered for this neglect. Right through history the old Indian ideal did not glorify political and military triumph, and it looked down upon money and the class that made money-making its profession. Honour and wealth did not go together, and honour was meant to go, at least in theory, to the men who served the community with little in the shape of financial reward.

The old culture managed to live through many a fierce storm and tempest, but, though it kept its outer form, it lost its real content. Today it is fighting silently and desperately against a new and all-powerful opponent—the *bania* or money-lender civilization of the capitalist West. It will succumb to this newcomer; for the West brings science, and science brings food for the hungry millions. But the West also brings an antidote to the evils of this cut-throat civilization—the principles of socialism, of cooperation, and service to the community for the common good. This is not so unlike the old brahman ideal of service, but it means the brahmanization (not in the religious sense of course) of all classes and groups and the abolition of class distinctions. It may be that when India puts on her new garment—as she must; for the old is torn and tattered—she will have it cut in this fashion, so as to make it conform both to present conditions and to her old thought. The ideas she adopts must become racy to her soil.

What has been the record of British rule in India? I doubt if it is possible for any Indian or Englishman to take an objective and dispassionate view of this long record. And, even if this were possible, it would be still more difficult to weigh and measure the psychological and other immaterial factors. We are told that British rule “has given to India that which throughout the centuries she never possessed, a government whose authority is unquestioned in any part of the sub-continent”; it has established the rule of law and a just and efficient administration; it has brought to India Western conceptions of parliamentary government and personal liberties; and “by transforming British India into a single unitary state it has engendered amongst Indians a sense of political unity” and thus fostered the first beginnings of nationalism. That is the British case, and there is much truth in it,

though the rule of law and personal liberties have not been evident for many years.

The Indian survey of this period lays stress on many other factors, and points out the injury, material and spiritual, that foreign rule has brought us. The point of view is so different that sometimes the very thing that is commended by the British is condemned by Indians. As Doctor Ananda Coomaraswamy⁵ writes: "One of the most remarkable features of British rule in India is that the greatest injuries inflicted upon the Indian people have the outward appearance of blessings."

As a matter of fact the changes that have taken place in India during the past century or more have been world changes common to most countries in the East and West. The growth of industrialism in western Europe, and later on in the rest of the world, brought nationalism and the strong unitary state in its train everywhere. The British can take credit for having first opened India's window to the West and brought her one aspect of Western industrialism and science. But, having done so, they throttled the further industrial growth of the country till circumstances forced their hands. India was already the meeting place of two cultures, the Western Asiatic culture of Islam and the eastern, her own product, which spread to the Far East. And now a third and more powerful impulse came from further west, and India became a focal point and a battleground for various old and new ideas. There can be no doubt that this third impulse would have triumphed and thus solved many of India's old problems, but the British, who had themselves helped in bringing it, tried to stop its further progress. They prevented our industrial growth, and thus delayed our political growth and preserved all the out of date feudal and other relics they could find in the country. They even froze up our changing and to some extent progressing laws and customs at the stage they found them, and made it difficult for us to get out of their shackles. It was not with their goodwill or assistance that the *bourgeoisie* grew in India. But after introducing the railway and other products of industrialism they could not stop the wheel of change; they could only check it and slow it down, and this they did to their own manifest advantage.

"On this solid foundation the majestic structure of the Government of India rests, and it can be claimed with certainty that in the period which has elapsed since 1858 when the Crown assumed supremacy over all the territories of the East India Company, the educational and material progress of India has been greater than it was ever within her power

5. (1877-1947); born in Sri Lanka and settled in the U.S.A.; an eminent historian of Indian art; author of *The Dance of Siva* and many other works.

to achieve during any other period of her long and chequered history." This statement from the *Report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee, 1934*, is not so self-evident as it appears to be, and it has often been stated that literacy actually went down with the coming of British rule. But, even if the statement were wholly true, it amounts to a comparison of the modern industrial age with past ages. In almost every country in the world the educational and material progress has been tremendous during the past century because of science and industrialism, and it may be said with assurance of any such country that progress of this kind "has been greater than was ever within her power to achieve during any other period of her long and chequered history"—though perhaps that country's history may not be a long one in comparison with Indian history. Are we needlessly cantankerous and perverse if we suggest that some such technical progress would have come to us anyhow in this industrial age, and even without British rule? And, indeed, if we compare our lot with many other countries, may we not hazard the guess that such progress might have been greater—for we have had to contend against a stifling of that progress by the British themselves? Railways, telegraphs, telephones, wireless and the like are hardly tests of the goodness or beneficence of British rule. They were welcome and necessary, and because the British happened to be the agents who brought them first we should be grateful to them. But even these heralds of industrialism came to us primarily for the strengthening of British rule. They were the veins and arteries through which the nation's blood should have coursed, increasing its trade, carrying its produce and bringing new life and wealth to its millions. It is true that in the long run some such result was likely, but they were designed and worked for another purpose—to strengthen the imperial hold and to capture markets for British goods—which they succeeded in achieving. I am all in favour of industrialism and the latest methods of swift transport, but sometimes, as I rushed across the Indian plains, the railway, that life-giver, has almost seemed to me like iron hands confining and imprisoning India.

The British conception of ruling India was the police conception of the state. Government's job was to protect the state and leave the rest to others. Public finance dealt with military expenditure, police, civil administration, interest on debt. The economic needs of the citizens were not looked after, and were sacrificed to British interests. The cultural and other needs of the people, except for a tiny handful, were entirely neglected. The changing conceptions of public finance which brought free and universal education, improvement of public health, care of the poor and feeble-minded, insurance of workers against illness, old age and unemployment and the like in other countries, were almost entirely

beyond the ken of the government. It could not indulge in these spending activities; for its tax system was most regressive, taking a much larger proportion of small incomes than of the larger ones, and its expenditure on its protective and administrative functions was terribly heavy and swallowed up most of the revenue.

The outstanding feature of rule by the British was their concentration on everything that went to strengthen their political and economic hold on the country. Everything else was incidental. If they built up a powerful central government and an efficient police force, that was an achievement for which they can take credit, but the Indian people can hardly congratulate themselves on it. Unity is a good thing, but unity in subjection is hardly a thing to be proud of. The very strength of a despotic government may become a greater burden for a people; and a police force, no doubt useful in many ways, can be, and has been often enough, turned against the very people it is supposed to protect. Bertrand Russell, comparing modern civilization with the old Greek, has recently written: "The only serious superiority of Greek civilization as compared to ours was the inefficiency of the police, which enabled a larger proportion of decent people to escape."

Britain's supremacy in India brought us peace, and India was certainly in need of peace after the troubles and misfortunes that followed the break-up of the Moghul Empire. Peace is a precious commodity, necessary for any progress, and it was welcome to us when it came. But even peace can be purchased as too great a price, and we can have the perfect peace of the grave, and the absolute safety of a cage or of prison. Or peace may be the sodden despair of men unable to better themselves. The peace which is imposed by an alien conqueror has hardly the restful and soothing qualities of the real article. War is a terrible thing and to be avoided, but it does encourage some virtues, which, according to William James,⁶ the psychologist, are: fidelity, cohesiveness, tenacity, heroism, conscience, education, inventiveness, economy and physical health and vigour. Because of this, James sought for a moral equivalent of war which, without the horrors of war, would encourage these virtues in a community. Perhaps if he had learned of noncooperation and civil disobedience he would have found something after his own heart, a moral and peaceful equivalent of war.

It is a futile task to consider the "ifs" and possibilities of history. I feel sure that it was a good thing for India to come in contact with

6. (1842-1910); an American psychologist and philosopher; founder of the pragmatist movement; his works include *The Will to Believe*, *Principles of Psychology* and *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.

the scientific and industrial West. Science was the great gift of the West, and India lacked this, and without it she was doomed to decay. The manner of our contacts was unfortunate and yet, perhaps, only a succession of violent shocks could shake us out of our torpor. From this point of view the Protestant, individualistic, Anglo-Saxon English were suitable; for they were more different from us than most other Westerners and could give us greater shocks.

They gave us political unity and that was a desirable thing, but, whether we had it or not, Indian nationalism would have grown and demanded that unity. The Arab world is today split up into a large number of separate states—-independent, protected, mandatory and the like—but throughout all of them runs the desire for Arab unity. There can be no doubt that Arab nationalism would largely achieve this unity if Western imperialist powers did not stand in the way. But, as in India, it is the purpose of these powers to encourage disruptive tendencies and create minority problems which weaken and partly counteract the nationalist urge and give an excuse to the imperialist power to stay on and pose as the impartial arbitrator. The political unity of India was achieved incidentally as a side-product of the empire's advance. In later years, when that unity allied itself to nationalism and challenged alien rule, we witnessed the deliberate promotion of disunity and sectarianism, formidable obstacles to progress.

What a long time it is since the British came here, a century and three quarters since they became dominant! They had a free hand, as despotic governments have, and a magnificent opportunity to mould India according to their desire. During these years the world has changed out of all recognition—England, Europe, America, Japan. The insignificant American colonies bordering the Atlantic in the eighteenth century constitute today the wealthiest, the most powerful and technically the most advanced nation; Japan, within a brief span, has undergone amazing changes; the vast territories of the U.S.S.R., where till only yesterday the dead hand of the Czar's government suppressed and stifled all growth, now pulsate with a new life and build a new world before our eyes. There have been big changes in India also, and the country is very different from what it was in the eighteenth century—railways, irrigation works, factories, schools and colleges, huge government offices and so forth.

And yet, in spite of these changes, what is India like today? A servile state, with its splendid strength caged up, hardly daring to breathe freely, governed by strangers from afar; her people poor beyond compare, short-lived and incapable of resisting disease and epidemic; illiteracy rampant, vast areas devoid of all sanitary or medical provision; unemployment on

a prodigious scale both among the middle classes and the masses. Freedom, democracy, socialism, communism are, we are told, the slogans of unpractical idealists, doctrinaires or knaves; the test must be one of the well-being of the people as a whole. That is indeed a vital test, and by that test India makes a terribly poor showing today. We read of great schemes of unemployment relief and the alleviation of distress in other countries; what of our scores of millions of unemployed and the distress that is widespread and permanent? We read also of housing schemes elsewhere; where are the houses of hundreds of millions of our people, who live in mud huts or have no shelter at all? May we not envy the lot of other countries where education, sanitation, medical relief, cultural facilities and production proceed rapidly ahead, while we remain where we were or plod wearily along at the pace of a snail? Russia in a brief dozen years of wonderful effort has almost ended illiteracy in her vast territories, and has evolved a fine and up to date system of education, in touch with the life of the masses. Backward Turkey, under the Ataturk Mustapha Kemal's leadership, has also made giant strides toward widespread literacy. Fascist Italy, on the very threshold of its career, attacked illiteracy with vigour. Gentile,⁶ the Education Minister, called for "a frontal attack on illiteracy. That gangrenous plague, which is rotting our body politic, must be extirpated with a hot iron." Hard words, unseemly for a drawing-room, but they show the conviction and energy behind the thought. We are politer here and use more rounded phrases. We move warily and exhaust our energies in commissions and committees: Indians have been accused of talking too much and doing little. It is a just charge. But may we not express our wonder at the inexhaustible capacity of the British for committees and commissions, each of which, after long labour, produces a learned report—"a great state document"—which is duly praised and pigeonholed? And so we get the sensation of moving ahead, of progress, and yet have the advantage of remaining where we were. Honour is satisfied, and vested interests remain untouched and secure. Other countries discuss how to get on; we discuss checks and brakes and safeguards lest we go too fast.

"The imperial splendour became the measure of the people's poverty", so we are told by the Joint Parliamentary Committee, 1934, with reference to the Moghul times. It is a just observation, but may we not apply the same measure today? What of New Delhi today with its Viceregal pomp and pageantry, and the provincial Governors with all

7. Giovanni Gentile (1875-1944); Italian philosopher and theorist of fascism.

their ostentation? And all this with a background of abject and astonishing poverty. The contrast hurts, and it is little difficult to imagine how sensitive men can put up with it. India today is a poor and dismal sight behind all the splendours of the imperial frontage. There is a great deal of patchwork and superficiality, and behind it the unhappy petty *bourgeoisie*, crushed more and more by modern conditions. Further back come the workers, living miserably in grinding poverty, and then the peasant, that symbol of India, whose lot is like that of Edwin Markham's⁷ *Man with the Hoe*, to be "born to Endless Night."

It would be absurd to cast the blame for all India's ills on the British. That responsibility must be shouldered by us, and we may not shirk it; it is unseemly to blame others for the inevitable consequences of our own weaknesses. An authoritarian system of government, and especially one that is foreign, must encourage a psychology of subservience and try to limit the mental outlook and horizon of the people. It must crush much that is finest in youth—enterprise, spirit of adventure, originality, "pep"—and encourage sneakishness, rigid conformity and a desire to cringe and please the bosses. Such a system does not bring out the mentality of real service, the devotion to public service or to ideals; it picks out the least public-spirited persons whose sole objective is to get on in life. We see what a class the British attract to themselves in India! Some of them are intellectually keen and capable of good work. They drift to government service or semi-government service because of lack of opportunity elsewhere, and gradually they tone down and become just parts of the big machine, their minds imprisoned by the dull routine of work. They develop the qualities of a bureaucracy—"a competent knowledge of clerkship and the diplomatic art of keeping office." At the highest they have a passive devotion to the public service. There is, or can be, no flaming enthusiasm. That is not possible under a foreign government.

But, apart from these, the majority of petty officials are not an admirable lot; for they have only learned to cringe to their superiors and bully their inferiors. The fault is not theirs. That is the training the system gives them. And if sycophancy and nepotism flourish, as they often do, is it to be wondered at? They have no ideals in service; the haunting fear of unemployment and consequent starvation pursues them, and their chief concern is to hold on to their jobs and get other jobs for their relatives and friends. Where the spy and that most odious of

8. (1852-1940); American poet, whose poem *The Man with the Hoe*, written in 1898, was a protest against the debasing drudgery and exploitation of labour.

creatures, the informer, always hover in the background, it is not easy to develop the more desirable virtues in a people.

Recent developments have made it even more difficult for sensitive, public-spirited men to join government service. The government does not want them, and they do not wish to associate with it too closely, unless compelled by economic circumstance.

But, as all the world knows, it is the White Man who bears the burden of empire, not the Brown. We have various imperial services to carry on the imperial tradition, and a sufficiency of safeguards to protect their special privileges, all, we are told, in the interests of India. It is remarkable how the good of India seems to be tied up with the personal interests and advancement of these services. If any privilege or prize post of the Indian Civil Service is taken away, we are told that inefficiency and corruption will result. If the reserved jobs for the Indian Medical Service are reduced, this becomes a "menace to India's health". And, of course, if the British element in the army is touched, all manner of terrible perils confront us.

I think there is some truth in this: that if the superior officials suddenly went away and left their departments in charge of their subordinates there would be a fall in efficiency. But that is because the whole system has been built this way, and the subordinates are not by any means the best men, nor have they ever been made to shoulder responsibility. I feel convinced that there is abundant good material in India, and it could be available within a fairly short period if proper steps were taken. But that means a complete change in our governmental and social outlook. It means a new state.

But of one thing I am quite sure, that no new order can be built up in India so long as the spirit of the Indian Civil Service pervades our administration and our public service. That spirit of authoritarianism is the ally of imperialism, and it cannot co-exist with freedom. It will either succeed in crushing freedom or will be swept away itself. Only with one type of state is it likely to fit in, and that is the fascist type. Therefore it seems to me quite essential that the Indian Civil Service and similar services must disappear completely, as such, before we can start real work on a new order. Individual members of these services, if they are willing and competent for the new job, will be welcome, but only on new conditions. It is quite inconceivable that they will get the absurdly high salaries and allowances that are paid to them today. The new India must be served by earnest, efficient workers who have an ardent faith in the cause they serve and are bent on achievement, and who work for the joy and glory of it, and not for the attraction of high salaries. The money motive must be reduced to a minimum. This is a vital matter

on which it is impossible to give in; for Indian freedom is bound up not only with the withdrawal of British forces and services, but also with the elimination of the authoritarian spirit that inspired them, and a levelling down of their salaries and privileges. The need for foreign helpers will be considerable, but I imagine that the least wanted will be civil administrators who have no technical knowledge. There will be no lack of such people in India.

What has been the record of British rule in India? Who are we to complain of its deficiencies when they were but the consequences of our own failings? If we lose touch with the river of change and enter a backwater, become self-centered and self-satisfied and, ostrich-like, ignore what happens elsewhere, we do so at our peril. The British came to us on the crest of a wave of new impulse in the world, and represented mighty historic forces which they themselves hardly realized. Are we to complain of the cyclone that uproots us and hurls us about, or the cold wind that makes us shiver? Let us have done with the past and its bickering, and face the future. To the British we must be grateful for one splendid gift of which they were the bearers, the gift of science and its rich offspring. It is difficult, however, to forget or view with equanimity the efforts of the British Government to encourage the disruptive, obscurantist, reactionary, sectarian and opportunist elements in India. Perhaps that too is a needed test and challenge for us, and before India is reborn it will have to go through again and again the fire that cleanses and tempers and burns up the weak, the impure and the corrupt.

11. To Basanta Kumar Mallik¹

Mussoorie
June 18, 1936

My dear Mallik,²

Your letter of the 12th May reached me long ago. I have delayed in answering it chiefly because I have been on the move and have been kept fully occupied. But another reason has been a certain difficulty in knowing what to say to you in answer. You wrote a great deal about our traditions and cultural heritage and as to how the European variety

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. A philosopher who finally set himself up as a minor guru at Oxford.

of socialism fits in with them.³ You ask me for a definite hard and fast scheme.

What exactly is this cultural heritage in so far as it affects our political and economic life? I do not ask the question rhetorically. But I do feel that a certain confusion arises when we consider these matters in this way. Then again how can one produce a cut and dried scheme? The application of any such scheme necessarily depends not only on the capture of political power but the balance of various forces in the country at the time of application. It is possible of course to plan out an Utopia regardless of all opposing elements and forces. That would not be very helpful though it might have its use in clarifying ideas.

Being myself a practising politician I cannot wholly take the philosopher's or scholar's detached view which does not concern itself much with present-day actualities. At the same time I do not want to be submerged by today, so I have to find a bridge to connect this today with a possible tomorrow, that tomorrow taking shape gradually as one advances towards it. This shape will depend partly on what may be called our cultural heritage but largely on certain economic facts and theories which govern the world.

I really cannot bring myself to lay down a definite course of developments in India or a very clear picture of the future of India. And yet I think that I have a clearer picture of both than most people have. I accept generally speaking the Marxist analysis of history though I think that in relation to India it does not lay sufficient stress on certain features of our past. That, however, does not falsify that analysis to any marked degree. I accept also the general communist goal of a classless society. I fail to see how that goal comes into conflict with anything that is really vital or valuable in our heritage. As I have stated in my *Autobiography* I look forward to the brahmanisation of all our people in the real sense of the word.

All this might have been fantasy but the very great success of Soviet Russia in almost every domain of activity—political, economic, educational and cultural—has brought it in the realm of actuality. I do not think that we should just copy blindly what has happened in Russia. But I do think that for India as for the rest of the world the general picture will have to be on those lines. That does not mean an adoption of the method of approach or a repetition of the errors that may have been committed in Russia. Nor does it mean that there will not be many minor changes bringing out the special characteristics and traditions of

3. In his letter of 12 May 1936, Mallik praised Jawaharlal for giving due importance to India's tradition and culture in formulating his socialistic policy.

our country. It will be for us to retain what is of real value in our culture and to fit it in with the new civilisation that we build up.

Have you read Sidney and Beatrice Webb's *Soviet Communism*? If not, do so.

After all, though we talk of ancient culture and modern science and economics, the big thing that stares us is the astounding poverty of India. It is for that that we have to find a solution. I can think in no other terms but that.

You know the kind of life I lead, of continuous strain and tension and an attempt to keep pace with numerous activities. I am seldom in Allahabad. Still in spite of these activities and tension I have not entirely lost a certain philosophical temper and with its help I try to retain a measure of sanity. I do not quite know how you could help me. That is for you to judge yourself. There is no point in your coming to Allahabad for, as I have said, I am seldom there and you will not even find a good library there. Why do you wish to leave Calcutta which should provide you with books and libraries in abundance?

I have come here for 10 days for some kind of rest. I go down to Allahabad on the 23rd and immediately I shall be on the move again.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

12. To Secretary, Bengal P.C.C.¹

Mussoorie
June 20, 1936

Dear Sir,

I have received today your letter dated the 14th June together with what purports to be a representation of the Bengal P.C.C. to the Working Committee regarding Babu Rajendra Prasad's decision on Bengal election disputes. In your letter you seem to challenge, to some extent at least, Babu Rajendra Prasad's competence to consider and decide this matter finally. As a matter of fact the last meeting of the A.I.C.C. gave him full authority, at my request, to deal with this matter. And so far as I am concerned I consider myself bound by his decision. Of course if your committee sends a representation to the Working Committee it

1. A.I.C.C. File No. P-6/1936, pp. 535-536, N.M.M.L.

will naturally be placed before the Working Committee. What the Working Committee may do in the matter I cannot say. But I think you will agree with me that the Working Committee is not likely to upset Rajendra Babu's decision unless the strongest arguments are advanced in favour of it. In such matters the Committee will not function as a court of appeal but only as a revising authority which takes action in extreme cases of injustice. It may even hold the view that in view of the A.I.C.C. decision Rajendra Babu was competent to decide the matter finally.

I write the above without having read your representation. I am thus approaching the question quite apart from the merits of Rajendra Babu's decision or the strength of your objections.

I am not prepared in any way to interfere with the normal working of Rajendra Babu's directions in the matter by postponing elections or otherwise simply on the ground that the Working Committee is going to consider the matter. I propose therefore to let matters take their course. I do not exactly know what Rajendra Babu's directions are, because I have not got his decision with me here. But whatever that may be it ought to remain and should be acted upon regardless of any representation which may be considered by the Working Committee. As a matter of fact the Working Committee is meeting on the 29th. It will consider your representation before the end of the month.

Quite apart from the legal arguments that might be advanced against Rajendra Babu's decision or in favour of fresh postponement of the elections, I should like you and your committee to consider the grave implications of these repeated attempts to postpone any final decision and to prolong this unfortunate controversy. There must be at some stage or other a finality in such matters. Otherwise it is quite impossible to carry on any work. You know well that Congress work in Bengal has suffered quite enough in the past because of this and even now it is inevitably in a state of suspended animation awaiting a final decision. It seems to me that the duty of every Congressman must be primarily to have this final decision whether it is good, bad or indifferent. The worst possible decision will probably be better than this interminable controversy and legal quibbling.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Babu Rajendra Prasad. It is for him to issue any further directions that he might think fit in the matter.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

13. The Agrarian Problem in India¹

Compared to other countries, India is poor in her political literature as well as in books dealing with current problems. In the nineteenth century Dadabhai Naoroji, Digby, Ranade and Romesh Dutt built up a strong and enduring foundation for such a literature. On that foundation our national movement grew, and most of us derived our political and economic ideas from those giants of old. Then there was a gap. During the past few years again books and pamphlets have appeared in some numbers, and though some are worthwhile, the lack of the real article still continues. We have either sketchy political surveys or heavy tomes on economics written by professors for would-be professors. The intelligent layman is left out in the cold and little help is provided for him to find a way in the chaos of the modern world as it affects India. Compare this with the abundance of good books in the countries of the West dealing with every problem that faces them. Many of them are frankly propagandist and one-sided, but there are also large numbers of objective studies collating and giving facts and figures and real pictures of the condition of the world today.

Whatever our views and ideas might be on present-day problems, we must agree that they should have a background of objective study of existing conditions. Thus only can we bring these ideas to the test of reality and evolve effective lines of activity. It is time, therefore, that our experts and students devote themselves to the proper study of facts as they are and to their presentation in an agreeable form. Of course this has been and is being done to some extent. But more is required, and a wider vision which embraces the whole though it may concentrate on a part.

Of all our problems none surely is more important and urgent than the agrarian problem. The dark shadow of the peasant covers the Indian landscape and intrudes itself into each one of our problems, political and economic. Realising this the National Congress has undertaken a close study of this problem and the drawing up of an agrarian programme. It is fitting, therefore, that the first of our political and economic studies should be a brief survey of this problem.

1. Allahabad, 8 July 1936. Foreword to Z. A. Ahmed's *The Agrarian Problem in India*, (Allahabad, 1936).

The object of this series of studies is to present facts objectively but it is not claimed that the writer has a blank mind with no views of his own. We have little use for blank minds. So, inevitably, the writer's outlook colours his presentation of his subject, and the objective he has in mind affects his conclusions. This outlook or these conclusions need not necessarily be those of the Congress.

This series does not pretend to deal exhaustively with the subjects included in it. Nor does it claim to supply the need for political and economic literature to which I have referred. It has a simpler and more modest purpose and that is to give the average reader a short and popular, and yet a scholarly, account of present-day conditions in India.

Dr. Z. A. Ahmad's² pamphlet is the briefest of surveys of a difficult and vast problem. Objection may well be taken that it does not discuss in any detail the various land tenure systems in India. And yet a detailed discussion in such a general survey would probably have detracted from the value of the pamphlet. We would have forgotten the wood for the trees, and many a lay reader might have felt bored at these details. Yet a study of these details is very necessary and it is hoped that such a detailed survey will be forthcoming at a later stage. But the broad survey must be grasped before we study details.

There is nothing new in this pamphlet which cannot be found elsewhere. But old truths have to be restated, old facts and arguments repeated, lest we forget. And the statement of them has to be made in a modern framework and a present-day setting. Dr. Ahmad has done that with ability and success and I have gone through his pages with ease and with profit. It surprised me to find how much he has put in this short compass. I commend this brochure not only to Congressmen but to all who are interested in understanding and solving India's major problem.

2. (b. 1908); secretary, economic information department, A.I.C.C., 1936-37, and U.P.C.C., 1937-42; member, national executive, Congress Socialist Party, 1937-40; later joined the Communist Party of India and was for some time its all-India secretary; member, Rajya Sabha, 1958-62 and from 1966.

14. On Criticisms of Congress Accounts¹

The approach of elections has apparently galvanised some of the opponents of the Congress in western and southern India into feverish activity of a peculiar kind. The desire to find something against the Congress has led them away from the straight and honourable paths of political controversy into shady and crooked ways. Our finances are attacked, our accounts challenged, the Tilak Swaraj Fund becomes suspect, and long-nosed detectives seem to prowl about trying to find out what happened fifteen years ago or thereabouts. There is something ludicrous about this sudden interest in old accounts, long passed and audited and put away in our archives; and this new interest becomes still more curious when we find that it is exhibited by gentlemen some of whom confess to not having contributed at all to any Congress fund. The donors are content, but the eager public spirit of those who did not give anything cannot be suppressed. I do not know if we are expected to produce, for the benefit of these eager spirits, all our accumulated account-books for the last fifteen years, or to get them printed afresh.

As I have previously stated,² all our central accounts have been carefully audited from year to year and circulated to the press for public information. These accounts contained also audited statements or provincial accounts, which were inspected periodically by our auditors and inspectors. Annually up to 1925 a big volume containing these full accounts was issued to the public and the press. By the end of 1925 the original collections for the Tilak Swaraj Fund were practically exhausted, except for the large sums earmarked for specific purposes and some trust funds. Our accounts therefore from 1926 onwards became much simpler and more modest and thus it was not necessary to issue annually the big books of accounts which had been prepared till then. From then onwards briefer statements of accounts were prepared, audited, submitted to the All India Congress Committee for approval and issued to the press. May I, as one long connected with the A.I.C.C. office, express my gratitude to and admiration for our treasurer, Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, and his office for the efficient way in which they have kept the A.I.C.C. accounts and looked after Congress funds during these many years, many of which were difficult years of storm and stress?

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 9 July 1936. *The Hindustan Times*, 10 July 1936.

2. See *ante*, item 5.

Seth Jamnalal Bajaj informs me that he and his office will be happy to give any information about Congress accounts to any donor who addresses himself to them. They will also welcome personal visits of donors to their office at 395 Kalbadevi Road, Bombay, where all the old and new accounts of the Congress office can be inspected and enquiries made. Donors interested in knowing how the earmarked items of the Tilak Swaraj Fund—about fifty lakhs were so earmarked—were distributed, and what part of them is still represented by investments, stocks, and immovable property, can easily find this out from the treasurer's office or by a personal reference to the accounts and papers. But every such visit of inspection should take place after reasonable notice and during office hours.

The treasurer's office as well as our office will always be happy to reply to all *bona fide* enquiries and to place the information at their disposal before all Congressmen and donors. But it is clear that there is no such *bona fide* intent behind the attacks and insinuations made by some people who are neither Congressmen nor donors to the Congress funds. It is not the practice of the Congress to rush to a court of law even though there may be sufficient justification for this. But if malicious and defamatory statements continue to be made they will have to be challenged in a law court.

15. To N. R. Malkani¹

Allahabad

9/7/36

My dear Malkaniji,²

Thank you for your letters and for the press cuttings you sent me which I have read with interest.³ I suppose one of the principal quests of life is the search for worthwhile individuals. Yet few of us undertake that

1. N.R. Malkani Papers, N.M.M.L.

2. (1890-1974); journalist and social worker; member, A.I.C.C., 1921-1967; additional Deputy High Commissioner for India in Karachi, 1948; director of rehabilitation, Government of Rajasthan, 1949-52; member, Rajya Sabha, 1952-62.

3. Reviewing Jawaharlal's *Autobiography* in *The Hindustan Times* of 25 June 1936, Malkani had written that the book "is written by a man who is yet playing the second act of his life-drama and who may yet be the great leader of future causes."

search and most are content with the mediocre variety. Indeed they are afraid of the exceptional type. He expects everything and generally makes himself a nuisance. But without him life would be a wilderness with no oases.

As I conceive real progress or civilization it means the raising of the general standard as well as the production of the high type of individual. Some people, Keyserling⁴ for instance, imagine that the two processes cannot go together and one has to choose—a deadening flat level at a fair altitude, or the beautiful lotus surrounded by mud. I do not see why this dilemma should be offered to us. Why should one not have a high general standard and at the same time mountain peaks rising above it? I believe in the development of individuality and yet I also believe in a socialistic order which is supposed to suppress individuality. I think that under real socialism the various economic and social inhibitions and obstructions being removed, individuality will have far greater play than at present.

To understand people, to go behind their outer coverings and probe underneath the surface, to seek for the reality in a man, attracts me. It is not always a pleasant business but the risk must be taken, unless one is content to go through life blind-folded. What worries me is the obvious desire of most people to keep their eyes shut and their irritations at those who invited them to look round.

Do not worry about me. I have a tough body and mind and can survive much.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

4. Count Hermann Keyserling (1880-1946); German philosopher; among his writings, *The Travel Diary of a Philosopher* is best known.

16. The Need for Good Books on India¹

India, in common with the world as a whole, is faced with vital problems. Many of these are world problems which affect us; some are peculiar to

1. Note, 11 July 1936. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L. It was proposed to form a National Publications Society which would publish books on Indian political and economic subjects. Jawaharlal, Narendra Deva and K. T. Shah were to be the editors, and Raghunandan Saran the secretary.

India though even these bear an intimate relation to wider problems. To solve these problems we must seek to understand them and to grasp their inner significance. A vague, though intensely felt, discontent with existing conditions does not, by itself, help in their solution. A knowledge of these conditions as well as of the underlying causes which have produced them is essential not only for the politician and the student but for all who dabble in public affairs and try to understand them. Unfortunately there is a lack of suitable literature so far as India is concerned.

To supply this lack will be the work of large numbers of experts and specially qualified persons. This series represents one such effort in this direction. The intention behind it is to study objectively and scientifically various political, economic, cultural and administrative aspects of our life as well as institutions and organisations, both official and non-official, which affect the public life of the country. The series will not only deal with the economic handicaps and political disabilities of our people, but also with the possibilities of progress and social reconstruction.

The series will consist of a number of monographs. It is proposed that each subject should be dealt with by a writer who is an expert in it or who is otherwise fully competent to deal with it. It is also proposed to have the monographs translated into the principal Indian languages.

Each monograph will be a separate study, but an attempt will be made to connect it with the whole, so that the entire picture can be seen and the particular subject should take its proper place in it. Thus each study will become an integral part of the whole. In order to achieve proper coordination between the various monographs and to maintain the plan and purpose of the series, it is proposed that the board of editors should append two chapters to each monograph. One of these at the beginning, showing the place of the institution or particular problem in the present system of Indian economic life; the other at the end, summarising conclusions and indicating how that institution should be remodelled or the problem dealt with in a scheme of political and social reconstruction.

It is proposed to have a board of five editors with a secretary who can look after the business side of the undertaking. The monographs can be published directly by the board or through some well-known publishers. In the event of publishers undertaking publication, the cost to the board will not be much. But probably it will be desirable to publish some at least of the monographs directly. A publisher would like to have his pick. As the monographs are likely to find a ready sale

an ultimate loss is not probable. Even if there is some loss on a particular publication, this will be covered by the profits on another. Authors should be paid on a royalty basis. If properly organised in a business-like way there is no reason why there should be any substantial loss, and there might well be an appreciable profit, which can be thrown into the business. Large sums therefore should not be needed.

Apart from the initial cost of publication it will be necessary to have an office with the requisite staff of typists, clerks, etc. Also reference books and some kind of a library. The library will contain reports and books which are not easily available in the public libraries. It is desirable to have the office in a city where well-equipped university libraries are available for reference. It may also be necessary to engage competent translators who can work regularly in the office. This will probably be better than engaging odd translators for each separate work, though, to some extent, this will be inevitable. The same set of translators under competent guidance will evolve a uniform method of doing their work and a uniform vocabulary of scientific and special terms will also grow up.

It is estimated that a sum of Rs. 15,000 should be available for this business. Besides a lump sum, it may be possible to build up a body of subscribers who pay a sum annually and get the publications free or at a reduced price.

The board of editors will work in cooperation with other organisations wherever this is possible, for instance, with the political and economic department of the National Congress, or a university department. But the responsibility for their work will rest on them alone and they will not commit any other organisation. Where possible and necessary they may organise research work by advanced students.

The whole scheme is an ambitious one and it may not be possible to go far to begin with. But though we may begin in a small way we must have the entire scheme before us and try to work up to it.

17. To Roger Baldwin¹

August 6, 1936

My dear Roger,

It is long since I have written to you although I believe that some of my colleagues in the Congress office here have been in correspondence

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

with you. Did I thank you for the papers of the Civil Liberties Union that you sent so promptly?

The other day I had a shock as I read quite accidentally a small paragraph in a newspaper about Dhan Gopal Mukerji's suicide. A little while before I had written to him and I must say that this kind of sudden disappearance is very upsetting. His recent letters had been peculiar and there had been much too much God about them.² He was obviously unhappy. But I do not quite understand the mentality which leads to suicide.

I am walking about in the maze of Indian politics frequently greatly worried. It is not much of a maze if one looks to essentials but then there are so many things which cover up these essentials and, anyway, just at present my mind continually runs to the happenings in Spain and to all the possibilities for good and evil that they hide.

Very probably you are somewhere in Europe now according to your usual habit. But this letter is going to New York.

Ever yours,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. Dhan Gopal Mukerji wrote to Jawaharlal on 4 May 1936: "I have reached the conclusion that without the grace of God nothing can become victorious. And remember grace descends on a saint or a sinner with equality in haphazard fashion. In the mind of God the descent of grace is according to law or laws. But to our small minds it seems to be lawless."

18. To Jehangir Vakil¹

August 9, 1936

My dear Jehangir,

I have been away hence the delay in writing to you. I received your previous letter also.

I find it a little difficult to write to you on the subject of spiritualism because my own way of looking at it is very different from yours. You mention your experience.² If some such experience comes to me I suppose I shall change my outlook also. Till then I must carry on in my

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Jehangir Vakil wrote that through a process of "spiritual revolution" he had become a convert to Mahatma Gandhi's policy of *ahimsa*.

own way. The only safe way for any person is the way he feels impelled by his own inner being to go. I am not vain enough to deny the truth that may be in someone else but I must see it for myself before I can act upon it.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

19. Appeal for Flood Relief in U.P.¹

Famine and flood have become constant visitors to our unhappy land. They are bad enough wherever they might come, but in India where millions live normally on the verge of starvation an additional calamity brings utter ruin.

In many parts of Bengal, there have been famine conditions for months and untold suffering has been the lot of the vast numbers of our countrymen there. During the last few weeks there have been floods in many provinces with their inevitable accompaniments of homeless wanderers without food or clothing or the barest necessities of life. The United Provinces have probably suffered most from these recent floods. I have just visited some of these flooded areas in this province and caught a glimpse of the misery that prevails. During a brief visit I could not of course form any adequate idea of the extent of the damage done or the many problems that await solution. But even a glimpse gave me an insight which newspaper accounts could not have done.

Many districts are affected in this province, Lucknow and Unnao and the neighbouring areas, as well as the eastern districts. They are all deserving of urgent help and relief but undoubtedly the worst sufferer is the enormous Gorakhpur district, with its dense population of 35 lakhs, and the surrounding areas. A great part of Gorakhpur district is today a vast ocean which covers the remains of what were twelve or thirteen hundred villages. Little islands stand out here and there with ruined huts, and treetops peep out above the surface of the waters.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 14 August 1936. *The Hindu*, 15 August 1936.

The immediate problem is one of relief, of providing shelter and food and clothing for the refugees. Government agencies have removed many of the stranded villagers and provided refugee camps for them. But the task of feeding these many thousands has almost entirely fallen on non-official organisations. The Gita Press in Gorakhpur has done splendid work not only in rescuing the stranded but in feeding them. They have been feeding daily about 10,000 refugees in camps, including those in government camps, and in addition have been sending food into the interior for another 20,000. The local Congress committee has also opened some camps and fed the refugees. There has been full cooperation between the various agencies working for relief.

Funds and clothing are urgently needed. The U.P. Congress Committee have appointed a Provincial Flood Relief Committee under whose auspices relief work is being done. Syt. Mohanlal Saxena, M.L.A., is the secretary of this committee and donations should be sent to him to Aminabad Park, Lucknow. Donations will also be accepted at the A.I.C.C. office, Swaraj Bhawan, Allahabad. Clothing, old and new, will be welcomed and I hope that Congress committees, khadi bhandars, students and others will make collections. Gifts from mill-owners of sarces, dhotis and cloth pieces will also be welcomed. Needless to say fancy articles are not required nor should torn and worn-out clothes be sent. All such clothes should be sent either to Shri Mohanlal Saxena, Lucknow, or direct to Baba Raghav Das, president, District Congress Committee, Gorakhpur.

As soon as the immediate problem of relief is dealt with other and more difficult problems have to be faced. Why should these devastating floods occur with such alarming frequency? Surely the science of engineering is capable of devising means to avoid these floods or to lessen the losses caused by them. It appears that recent floods in Gorakhpur district have been both bigger and more frequent than previous ones. Are these caused, as some people say, by the building of embankments and railway lines or other obstructions to the free outflow of storm waters? These questions must be tackled by public enquiry conducted by competent engineers.

Another unfortunate feature of the Gorakhpur flood was the suddenness with which it came. There was no warning whatever in large areas and suddenly at night the waters rushed in on the collapse of an embankment and overwhelmed hundreds of villages.

An important matter which needs immediate attention is the question of rent and revenue. It is manifest that a vast area of cultivated land has been covered by flood waters and the crops completely ruined.

It is quite impossible for the people concerned, and they number several hundreds of thousands, to pay any rent or revenue. All current rent and revenue, as well as arrears, for the affected land must be remitted. Legal proceedings for the realisations of these sums must be stopped forthwith. A moratorium on the debts of the tenants as well as the zamindars affected is also an immediate necessity. These points have to be stressed as I was told of instances where coercion was being used by the zamindars' agents to realise rent and a surviving cow or bullock was being attached and taken away. Under existing conditions of distress these methods are little short of inhuman. The peasantry who have suffered will have to be provided with seeds free of cost as well as materials for the reconstruction of their huts. These problems have to be faced; but for the moment the demand for relief in the shape of money and clothes is urgent and I hope this demand will be met generously by people all over the country.

20. To Ellen Gottschalk¹

August 29, 1936

Dear Miss Gottschalk,²

On return from Bombay yesterday I received your letter of the 3rd August.

I have myself been receiving unsatisfactory reports about Roy's health in prison and I have been distressed about it. A friend of mine in Dehra Dun had an interview with him in the gaol on the 19th July and he wrote to say that Roy complained of severe internal pains. He issued a statement to the press to this effect but subsequently it was stated, probably on behalf of government, that Roy was keeping good health. I should very much like to be of service to Roy in this matter but we are so helpless in it. Quite apart from any internal trouble that he may have, I can well understand the terribly depressing effect of long solitary confinement. Five years of it for a sensitive individual! From what I could find out, the place where he is kept in the Dehra Dun gaol is highly unsatisfactory and depressing.

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (1908-1960); an American domiciled in France; married M.N. Roy in 1937; edited *Radical Humanist* published from Calcutta and M.N. Roy's *Philosophical Consequences of Modern Science*.

I am told that Roy's release is due on November 20th. Personally I doubt if the government will give him any further remission. They are peculiarly callous in such matters. But I am writing to friends in the Legislative Assembly and asking them to do what they can in the matter. Apart from the prejudice which induces government to act in such a way towards those who are their political opponents, the government is a terribly slow-moving machine. At every step there is red tape and references from one department to another. Probably these references will take many weeks and we shall be on the eve of November before the final answer is forthcoming. In any event we shall try to press that a competent outside doctor should examine him.

I am asking our foreign department to send you the foreign newsletter that they issue from time to time.

With kind regards and good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

21. To Govind Ballabh Pant¹

August 29, 1936

My dear Pantji,

I enclose two letters which will speak for themselves. One is from Khurshed Lal² and the other from M. N. Roy's wife who is in Paris now. Both refer to Roy's state of health. I wonder if it is possible for you or anyone else to do anything in the matter in the Assembly or outside it. I am myself sure that Roy is seriously unwell. Whether he has any serious internal trouble or not I cannot of course say, but there can be little doubt that five years solitary confinement has injured him greatly, as it would injure any person. And Roy is a very sensitive person who reacts to his surroundings more than the average person might.

I do not suppose you can do much in the matter. Still an effort should be made. Even if his release cannot be hastened, he ought at

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. (1903-1950); Congressman from Dehra Dun; member, Constituent Assembly, 1946; Deputy Minister, Government of India, 1948-50.

least to be examined thoroughly by competent outside doctors.³ He is being kept, and he has been there a long time now, in the female ward of the Dehra gaol. You know well what an awful hole this is. I could not survive this place for many weeks. The government have not even had the decency to keep him in the new barrack outside the main gaol where they kept me, although that was depressing enough.

In case Khurshed Lal has another interview with Roy, I am asking him to write to you direct.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. In his letter Khurshed Lal had suggested Roy's medical examination by "an independent medical board".

22. To K.T. Shah¹

September 2, 1936

*My dear Shah,

I have just returned to Allahabad from Cawnpore. I have had no breathing time since I was in Bombay and have been unable to give much thought to the rules and regulations.² I am here in Allahabad now just for three days and a vast amount of work as well as committee meetings await me here. Still I shall make an effort to find some time. But one thing is beginning to frighten me. I have taken so much work on my shoulders and the burden seems to be growing, so that it is becoming almost impossible for me to keep pace with my work. I do not know how much time I shall be able to give in future to editorial work of the kind you would require. You were quite right in stressing that we must have workers and not ornaments. But what am I to do? I am a worker certainly. But I work in so many fields.

It would certainly be a good thing if we could meet. But I see no way of finding a day for the purpose. I am definitely booked up for the

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5 (KW) (ii) (Part II)/1936, p. 569.

2. Shah had sent to Jawaharlal the draft rules and regulations of the National Publications Society.

13th September as well as before and after. I shall only spend a few days in Allahabad towards the end of the month and then go to Madras.

I shall try to send you my suggestions about your draft to Simla.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

23. To Vallabhbhai Patel¹

September 2, 1936

My dear Vallabhbhai,

I have received your letter of the 29th August today on my return from Cawnpore. The Cawnpore visit was a great success and during the two and a half days there I addressed about 25 to 30 meetings. I met all manner of people and on the whole the Congress position there, both in regard to elections and general work, has been greatly strengthened....

As regards the question of Bhulabhai's response to an invitation² I quite agree that any formal invitation must be rejected or rather an answer should be sent that the matter will be referred to the Working Committee. Informal invitations are more difficult and ticklish matters. They vary from something approaching almost a formal invitation to an accidental meeting. It is not easy to lay down any hard and fast rules but personally I am inclined to think that they should be avoided with all courtesy, reference being made to a consultation with the Working Committee. Further if an informal or other approach is made the basis of such an approach should be enquired into. Thus while we may discuss constitutional and other matters even without a definite basis being formulated (though here too it is far more desirable to have some such basis) there is the question of political prisoners, detenus, the banning of Congress organisations, etc., which demands a clear indication before we can talk about any matter profitably. I imagine that if some such reply is sent to any approach it would be the right course to adopt.

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5 (KW) (ii) (Part II)/1936, p. 577, N.M.M.L. Extracts.
2. Bhulabhai Desai had asked for guidance in case he was invited while at Simla for talks with the Viceroy. Mahatma Gandhi had thought he should decline a formal invitation, but agree to informal talks. The final decision, however, was left to Jawaharlal.

I am very glad to learn that the Mahakoshal matters have been very satisfactorily settled.³ I met Govind Das⁴ and Dwarka Prasad Misra⁵ for a few minutes on my way to Cawnpore and they told me so.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Bhulabhai Desai.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. At a meeting of the Joint Congress Parliamentary Board of the Central Provinces and Berar, a compromise settlement was effected between the rival groups led by Seth Govind Das and Ravi Shankar Shukla.
4. (1896-1974); joined noncooperation movement, 1920; imprisoned several times during the freedom movement; president, Mahakoshal P.C.C., 1928-34 and 1946-57; member, Lok Sabha from 1952 till his death.
5. (b. 1901); suffered imprisonment several times during the freedom movement; minister, Central Provinces, 1937-39 and later in 1946; Chief Minister, Madhya Pradesh, 1963-67; author of several books; edited *Lokmat*.

24. Homage to Jatindranath Das¹

Seven years ago, on September 13th, died Jatin Das in a Lahore prison on the sixty-first day of his hunger-strike. This brave and gentle and lovable boy gave his life voluntarily in protest against the treatment given to political prisoners. India was moved and stirred by this self-immolation and the memory of it moves us strangely still, and questions arise in our minds, disturbing, accusing questions. What have we done for the cause for which Jatin Das gave his life? Have we done all we could for the betterment of the lot of the political prisoners, those soldiers of freedom whose life is one of continuous suffering and sacrifice?

In recent months Jogesh Chatterji² underwent a long ordeal by hunger-strike for this purpose. He was induced at last to give this up on the assurance that every effort will be made to organize public opinion on this subject. Babu Rajendra Prasad, the president of the All India

1. Statement issued at Allahabad, 3 September 1936. *The Leader*, 6 September 1936.
2. (1895-1969); member of Anusilan Party; arrested in 1925 in connection with Kakori Conspiracy Case; undertook a fast for 111 days in 1935-36 in support of demand for better treatment of political prisoners; member of Revolutionary Socialist Party, 1940-53; joined Congress in 1955; member, Rajya Sabha from 1956 till his death.

Political Prisoners' Committee, issued a comprehensive statement restating the demands of political prisoners for humane treatment.³ We have many preoccupations and urgent problems face us, but we may not forget the lot of our comrades in prison in India, in detention camps, in the Andamans, and we must ceaselessly press for their better treatment, in particular for more human contacts by more frequent interviews and letters, and mental food through books, newspapers and writing materials. We must insist on the ending of solitary confinement, which is such a torture to the sensitive and cultured, and on the removal of political prisoners from the Andamans.

This and much else we must bear in mind and work for, and it is fitting that on the anniversary of Jatin Das's death we should think of him and of all those who are suffering silently behind prison bars. I commend to all Congress committees and Congressmen to observe Sunday, September 13th, as Political Prisoners' Day and to hold public meetings where resolutions based on Rajendra Babu's statement should be passed.

3. In his statement of July 1936, Rajendra Prasad criticised the segregation of political prisoners in different prisons and demanded their separation from ordinary prisoners, and said that they should be provided with books and newspapers.

25. To Patrick Lacey¹

September 5, 1936

Dear Mr. Lacey,

I have your letter of the 13th August. I am sorry for the delay in answering it. But, as you know, I have been on the move most of the time.

I did not see the leading article in *The Statesman* to which you refer or the correspondence on the subject.² Perhaps I was not in India then. There is no doubt that the present system of arranged marriages is a dismal failure. Probably it was not such a failure, though inevitably it

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5 (KW)(ii)(Part II)/1936, p. 465, N.M.M.L.
2. In three articles in *The Statesman*, Lacey had described the system of arranged marriages as almost diabolical and suggested that if public opinion could not remedy the evil, there should be legislation permitting institutions to nullify proceedings.

must have been bad, a generation or two back. But conditions are so changing today, even in India, that the present generation is getting more and more out of touch with the parents of the older type. Hence the growth of a hiatus and the consequent increase of misery. The dowry system is of course utterly bad.

Probably if the age of marriage was raised sufficiently not only by law, which cannot go very far in this direction, but also by social custom, some of the evils of the arranged marriages would disappear. Grown up boys and girls do not submit so easily to parental coercion.

It seems to me that what is required first of all is a civil marriage act which includes all people in India and which does not require any denunciation of religion. Secondly, divorce should be made easy and should depend on mutual desire. It would be desirable also to have legislation permitting a Hindu couple to institute nullity proceedings under certain circumstances. What these circumstances should be requires some careful consideration. But I should not like them to be such as to make the proceedings difficult for the parties concerned. Personally a mutual desire to separate seems to me a sufficient cause. But I doubt if that will be acceptable to most Hindus today. To institute nullity proceedings on the ground that marriage was arranged without the couple's consent might lead to all manner of difficulties. Consent itself or want of it will be difficult to prove or disprove. If there was such a law, parents may adopt all manner of dodges to accumulate evidence of consent. And even if this consent was willingly given by an immature girl or boy, what value has it got?

These are some odd thoughts that strike me. They are rather vague but they will give you some idea of how I approach the subject.

You can use this opinion as and when you like.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

26. Gandhi Jayanti¹

Early in October India celebrates an anniversary which is dear to all of us. It is the anniversary of the birth of Gandhiji, our beloved leader.

1. Statement to the press, Allahabad, 21 September 1936. *The Tribune*, 24 September 1936.

It is right that we should thus show our love and affection to him and our deep appreciation of what he has meant for us and for India. We, who have grown up politically under his great influence, hardly realise the vast changes that he has brought about in our country. We take them almost for granted. But we know well enough how empty India would have been without him, and how greatly different. It has been the good fortune of India to produce, even in the days of her degradation, this master-spirit who has cast his impress on the world and forced the world's attention on India.

Every year we celebrate this anniversary. But this year it has a special significance, for he has only just recovered from a serious illness.² He lies weak still and our hearts go out to him to wish him well, and our minds look forward to him to lead us afresh in the struggle for freedom.

The celebration has ordinarily been extended to a week—the Gandhi Jayanti Week. During this week I hope that meetings will be held all over the country to convey the nation's love and good wishes to her dear and chosen leader. But the best message that we can send him is the message of our readiness to continue the struggle for freedom, and our preparedness for peaceful action and disciplined sacrifice in this great cause. The clouds gather round the world and overshadow the horizon; but if we hold to our anchor, we shall be able to face the storms and tempests that may envelop us.

All the world knows how dear khadi is to Gandhiji. It is right that we should devote this week, therefore, in popularising khadi. Khadi has long been a symbol of the Congress and of freedom in this country. It is the label of those who stand for independence. It is the link between many of us and the peasant masses of the country. Let us, therefore, carry the message of khadi, during this week, to millions of people in our country, in town and village alike.

I trust that all Congressmen will patronise certified khadi only. There is too much of uncertified stuff in the market and this, like a bad coin, injures the real article. It is a little cheaper as the wages paid to spinners and weavers are lower. But the Spinners' Association and its recognised centres pay higher and standard wages to their workers and we must encourage this by patronising certified khadi only.

2. Mahatma Gandhi had contracted malaria and been admitted into hospital.

27. Message to Burmese Students¹

September 22, 1936

Dear Friend,

I send you all good wishes on the occasion of your anniversary. The younger generation of Burma, you say, looks up for light. That is right. But the younger generation will find the light not by looking up for it merely. It will have to seek out the path both through intellectual adventure and action.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. Sent on the sixth anniversary of the Rangoon University Students Union. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5(KW)(ii)(Part I)/1936, p. 287, N.M.M.L.

28. To the Chairman, Allahabad Municipal Board¹

September 24, 1936

Dear Sir,

I am writing to you about the various advertisements that appear on the walls and hoardings facing public streets in Allahabad. For some of us it has become a painful ordeal to go through these streets and to face these very ugly and sometimes highly improper advertisements. House owners with a stretch of wall have to put up with these notices and posters on their walls. I do not know if there are any bye-laws governing these advertisements on public highways. May I suggest to the Board to consider this matter both from the aesthetic and financial point of view? I suggest that all such advertisements should require some sanction and should be taxed. They will thus be controlled, improper ones will be excluded, and a substantial revenue will be derived by the Board. I might add that some such practice prevails in many European municipalities.

Yours faithfully,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

29. To the District Magistrate, Allahabad¹

September 26, 1936

Dear Sir,

I write to you in connection with the search of our office that took place yesterday under the warrant issued by you for this purpose. I was a little surprised at this search as I understand that there had been some correspondence between you and our office in regard to the issue by our office of newsletters, and we had informed you that we would take legal advice in the matter and comply with the provisions of the law. Any request from you for further information regarding our bulletins or newsletters would have been willingly complied with, and specimen copies of such newsletters would have been sent to you in the ordinary course, but it appears that you preferred the unusual and abnormal course of issuing a warrant for the forcible seizure of various newsletters and documents.

I have no desire to discuss the propriety of such action by you. But I should like to point out to you that, in the letter sent to your office dated September 2nd by my colleague, Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, you were requested to indicate which particular bulletin or circular or newsletter you referred to in your letter dated August 21st, which was delivered in our office on the 1st of September. You were good enough to point out in your reply dated September 5th that no particular pamphlet was referred to. Under the circumstances, it was difficult for us to take any action without legal advice.

As was pointed out to you in Dr. Lohia's letter of 2nd September, we issued from time to time a variety of bulletins, circulars and newsletters. They are issued sometimes by me as President or by the General Secretary or assistant secretary of the A.I.C.C. or by the officers in charge of our foreign, political and economic departments. One of these is the *Congress Bulletin* which is printed and sent to the members of the All India Congress Committee, our subordinate committees and sometimes to foreign organisations with whom we are in touch. This *Bulletin* is usually issued by the General Secretary and contains Congress proceedings as well as notes on current happenings and instructions to Congressmen.

Our foreign department has been issuing a newsletter which is sent to a considerable number of addresses in foreign countries, and to a small number of addresses in India, notably provincial Congress committees. We have also issued a survey of foreign affairs to the Indian press, a special

1. Rajendra Prasad Papers, F. No. III/36, National Archives of India.

bulletin on Palestine, and certain economic and other data to the Indian press.

Besides the above, our office has to issue from time to time all manner of circular letters to our own members and committees in India as well as to organisations abroad. If we have to issue a special note on a particular matter, such as Palestine, this is sent to our committees as well as to newspapers.

In view of these multifarious activities, it was not easy for us to decide which, if any, of our circulars or bulletins or newsletters require your permission or other action. We sought your help in the matter but you were unable to point out any particular one of these newsletters or bulletins. Thereupon, we took steps to obtain counsel's opinion on it and Dr. Kailas Nath Katju was approached by us for this purpose. Dr. Katju was unable to send us his opinion soon as he was heavily engaged otherwise. He has now sent us that opinion.

In brief, that opinion amounts to this, that the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1932 or the Cr. L.A.A. of 1935 has no further bearing on this matter and need not be considered; also that the amendment of the Indian Press Act XXIII of 1931 by the Indian Press Act XXIII of 1932 has also no bearing upon the present topic. Therefore, the only provisions which we have to consider are the provisions of the Indian Press Act XXIII of 1931. These provisions are extraordinarily wide and vague. They can be extended to include many of the activities of any office or business which issues circulars, bulletins, newsletters, etc. The intention of the legislature was probably not to interfere with the normal working of offices and business. Probably it wished to control news-sheets which are sold to the public at large or are easily obtainable by anybody. So far as our newsletters or bulletins are concerned, they are not issued to the public, they have no subscription and they have a very limited circulation except in so far as parts of them may be reproduced in the public press. Only in the case of our printed bulletin, we have asked some Congress committees and libraries to cover postage. Thus, *prima facie*, these bulletins, newsletters, etc. are not newspapers or public sheets in any way and do not come within the provisions of the Indian Press Act of 1931. It is possible, however, that owing to the broad and inclusive provisions of the Act, the argument may be advanced that any statement of fact is news, however stale it might be, and any interpretation of it is a comment which comes under the provisions of the Act.

For our part, it has not been our wish in this matter to violate or evade the provisions of the existing law, however much we may think that that law is unreasonable. But we wanted to be clear about the implications of this law, before we could take any definite action in this

matter. To avoid a lengthy controversy on this subject, we are prepared to seek your permission for such newsletters, bulletins, circulars, etc. You have already got numerous copies of these in your possession to enable you to judge of their contents.

I understand that so far as our printed bulletin is concerned, this is not a subject of controversy. We have issued this irregularly from time to time for the last many years. No copies of it were seized by the police yesterday. I take it that our circular letters to our Congress committees, to members of the A.I.C.C. and to foreign organisations and individuals with whom we are in contact are also not a subject of controversy. There remain four types of bulletins or newsletters: (1) our foreign newsletter which is usually issued twice a month mostly to foreign addresses (2) a survey of foreign affairs which we propose to issue as a rule twice a month to the Indian press and certain selected addresses of Congressmen and Congress committees (3) statistical and other data relating to India which we may issue from time to time to the press in India and to our committees and (4) special bulletins which might be issued in regard to particular questions, such as the bulletin which we issued in regard to the Palestine issue.

These newsletters or bulletins will be issued by Dr. Rammanohar Lohia of our foreign department and Dr. K. M. Ashraf of our political and economic department. Occasionally, they might be issued by our General Secretary, Mr. J. B. Kripalani, or, in his absence, by the assistant secretary Mr. D. Narsinh.

I shall be glad if you will kindly authorise the publication of such newsletters and publications.

Yours faithfully,
Jawaharlal Nehru

30. To Purnima Banerji¹

Allahabad
September 1936

My dear Norah,

Your letter. I have survived the cycle accident² as I propose to survive other accidents. But I have been feeling very tired these days and I am not likely to go out of Allahabad till the end of this month.

I think our *halka* committees should certainly do something constructive. We shall discuss that later after the committees are properly formed.

I have read a good part of Aldous Huxley's book.³ I have been carrying it about with me during my tour but have had no time to finish it yet.

As for the answers to the problems of life, do you know what Marx said about it? The only way history answers questions is by putting further questions.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. Jawaharlal fell from a bicycle on his way to Nagla Dakao in the remote interior of the Etawah district on 14 September 1936.

3. *Eyeless in Gaza*, a novel published in 1936.

31. To K.T. Shah¹

Camp Wardha
October 3, 1936

My dear Shah,

I am dictating this letter in the train on my way to Wardha and Madras I have gone through the synopsis of the first monograph.² Narendra Deva happened to be in Allahabad and I had a brief talk with him on the subject. We were both very busy and could not discuss the matter at length. He will write to you separately. But on the whole there was not much difference between us.

1. J.N. Papers, N.M.M.L.

2. Later published under the title *Provincial Government in the New Constitution*.

The synopsis you have sent seems to be good and exhaustive, and I have not much to say about it.

In regard to chapter 1 (Introduction), it seemed to Narendra Deva and me that this chapter, though perfectly right so far as it goes, was hardly the kind of introduction which the three editors are supposed to give jointly. We would suggest that this chapter be left as it is but a kind of general introduction to the series, on behalf of the editors, be made to precede it. This is desirable because this monograph will be the first in the series, and some explanation of the purpose of the series is desirable. Towards the end of this general introduction we might deal with the particular place of the subject of the monograph, that is provincial administration, in the larger picture. I think some such introduction from the editors would be desirable both from the point of view of the series and the particular monograph. After this your chapter 1 would follow, almost as it is, except that it need not be called an introduction then.

The concluding chapter will be important as it will be an indication of what we want done. I am myself not quite clear from your synopsis exactly how you propose to deal with it. Is it your intention to suggest some kind of provincial or other units which will work within a socialist framework? Or do you wish merely to clear the field for a future application of socialism? This applies, to some extent, to other matters dealt with in the preceding chapters, such as finance, judiciary, etc.

Then again all manner of questions arise as to the nature of these provincial units and, I imagine, we should deal with this matter somewhat tentatively. I agree that the real unit should be an economic unit. On the other hand cultural and linguistic considerations will have to be borne in mind. There is a strong feeling in India about this and we may not ignore it. I should like to give cultural and linguistic autonomy as far as possible, as in Russia, within the framework of a larger economic unit. Thus we may have the provincial unit and autonomous areas. I do not like huge provinces. They are apt to develop separatist tendencies. Yet I do not see how we can easily split them up without offending present-day sentiment. In the south, linguistic provinces are likely to be relatively small. But in the north, where there is an enormous more or less single language area, the problem is somewhat different. Perhaps it may be possible to have a large unit divided up into sub-divisions for economic and administrative purposes. On the one hand we have to lay stress on the unity of India, that is centralisation. On the other hand, we must allow

freedom for cultural and other growth which might suffer from too much centralisation.

I mention these odd thoughts that are coming to my mind for you to consider. And because I am not certain in my own mind as to the final shape of these units I suggest that our proposals should not be too definite.

In chapter 4, you will have to deal with current problems which are agitating the public mind, for instance, the question of accepting office or not, as well as the chances of Congress majorities from various provinces. You will of course deal with this objectively, and yet inevitably you will have to consider the present position and deal with controversial topics.

In chapter 1, I suggest that you might refer to linguistic considerations also, as also in the final chapter.

Another small matter. I do not like the word "governordom" in chapter 3. I wish you would use some other word for it. In chapter 4, middle of the page, I would like some other word to be used instead of "denaturalises".

I hope you will go ahead with the monograph. As for the next one, Narendra Deva and I are of opinion that the "Federal Government of India" should follow. This seems to come naturally after the provincial administration.

I am returning your draft.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

32. To Khurshed Lal¹

28.10.1936

My dear Khurshed Lal,

Your letter. I am sorry to learn of Roy's illness. I think that on his release he might come to Allahabad to stay with me for a few days and we can discuss his future programme then. I want you therefore to convey my invitation to him as soon as you can. He can come to Allahabad even if I am not here. My sister will be glad to have

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5(KW)(i)(Part I)/1936, p. 259, N.M.M.L.

him. But please send intimation of his arrival to my sister. I am leaving Allahabad on Nov. 3rd and am likely to return here on the 18th night. Then probably I shall leave on the 20th again for Bareilly. After the Bareilly conference I am touring in some districts round about there. Early in December I shall be back again in Allahabad.

In the event of Roy catching me in Allahabad on the 18th or 19th he should come here straight from Dehra Dun. If, however, he is discharged on the 20th then I think he might come to Bareilly and meet me there and later go to Allahabad.² Anyway, I want him to take some rest to recoup his health and he is welcome to stay at Anand Bhawan. Probably it will be desirable for him later on to go either to Calcutta or Bombay to consult doctors. We can see to that later.

As regards money required by him, while he will not require much to begin with, except for clothes and travelling expenses, there will be no difficulty about this sum and you can hold me responsible for it. So, will you please advance the necessary amount for clothes and travelling to him if it is necessary, and let me know what it is so that I can send you a cheque?

As for a demonstration, his health will hardly fit in with one. I think it will be right that you should give him an informal welcome to which Congress workers and some other people might be invited. But public meetings, processions and the like should be avoided.

I am returning Miss Gottschalk's letter.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

2. Roy was released on 20 November 1936 and met Jawaharlal at Bareilly.

33. To Jack C. Winslow¹

October 29, 1936

Dear Winslow,²

I must apologise to you for the great delay in acknowledging your letter of August 4th. I read it with great interest and I kept it by me

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.

2. An English missionary who founded the Christa Seva Sangha at Poona.

for a considered and fairly lengthy reply. But the kind of life I have been leading here is so absurd and abnormal that I find little time to write or even to read. I rush about from place to place, speak to numerous gatherings and have a perpetual sore throat. Doubts assail me at times as to whether this kind of thing does good to anybody. But still I carry on.

Even now I am afraid I cannot write much to you. Your letter as well as other letters from members of the Oxford group³ have helped me to understand a little better the background of this group. I appreciate this background and yet somehow I do not quite see how this is going to solve our present-day problems. The fact that it might help in their solution may be undoubted. But surely something more is necessary, some grappling with the political and economic structure out of which these problems have arisen. It is right that we should be made to think in terms of honesty, purity and love, and yet most of us cannot get out of the complex of ideas which limit our thoughts so much. It is common enough surely for people who think they are absolutely honest to come into conflict with each other.

I see all around us the menace of a world conflagration growing. The Oxford movement may help in toning down conflicts and passions and, to that extent, remove or postpone this menace. But still the menace grows. I have been obsessed by the terrible happenings in Spain. I do not see how such things can be charmed away by mere goodwill on the part of well-meaning persons. However it is enough for me to find that the Oxford movement has attracted fine and true persons. That in itself is a tribute to it, and I shall watch it with interest.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

3. The Moral Rearmament Movement, founded by Dr. Frank Buchman, was misleadingly labelled the "Oxford Group" until 1938.

34. To H.R. Varadarajan¹

3.11.1936

Dear Friend,

I have your letter.² I did not go to Mysore because India is a vast country and I have to go to many other places before I can find time to go to Mysore. I know very well what the state of affairs is in Indian states. Inevitably I go to our strong centres first. Your discussion of Mysore does not tempt me. I cannot give time at present to wake up those who are asleep.

About yourself I cannot advise you in such personal matters.³ I know nothing about you and even if I did I would refrain from advising. All I will say is this that a medical course is in itself a course worth going through, for medical knowledge is definitely of use to the world and to our country. Also that everyone should know a job thoroughly.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5(KW)(i)(Part I)/1936, p. 9, N.M.M.L.
2. In his letter of 28 October 1936, Varadarajan had drawn Jawaharlal's attention to the curtailment of basic civil liberties in the state of Mysore.
3. He wished to leave the medical college to join politics.

35. To Edward Thompson¹

December 3, 1936

Dear Thompson,

Your letter reached me during my tour.² I have just come back here and I am sending these few lines to you so as to catch you before you leave this distressful and distressing country. It is easy, frightfully easy, to point out the contradictions and the follies of our people in India as

1. J.N. Correspondence, N.M.M.L.
2. Edward Thompson, in his letter of 24 November 1936, criticised what he called a section of third-rate British, European and American idolaters of India.

well as those who live in the West. But do you not attach too much importance to certain happenings? For instance, your reference to the British or American idolaters. It is natural that many of our people suffering from a certain inferiority complex should welcome these persons with open arms. There are other obvious reasons also, but the whole thing has no importance.

There is little that you write about Aurobindo Ghose with which I do not agree. It may interest you to learn that he issued an order to his *ashramites* not even to attend the public meeting I addressed in Pondicherry. But again you seem to judge all India from Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry. I suppose it is a bit of India. But a very small bit. What surprises me far more than Aurobindo Ghose is a man like the Aga Khan carrying it off both in India and in England.

I have seen your article in the *News Chronicle*. Of course I disagree completely with your analysis of the Indian situation. It may be that I am wrong. But I should like to assure you that the conclusions that I have arrived at have little to do with excited crowds of youths. One thing that you say I must protest against. You say that I never miss a chance of cursing Sastri. Now, apart from what I have written in my *Autobiography*, I do not think I have ever written or said anything in public even in strong criticism of Sastri. I cannot even remember having said anything in private about him, except what I have written in my *Autobiography*.

But I do not wish to discuss your article. I wanted just to send you my good wishes on the eve of your departure from India. Do not go away with all this bitterness for this unhappy country.

I shall write to my daughter and I am sure she will be happy to meet you and your wife. But she is not likely to go to Oxford till next October.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

36. To J. N. Gupta¹

Allahabad
Dec. 7, 1936

Dear Mr. Gupta,

Thanks for your open letter to me which I have read with interest. You will forgive me if I do not answer it at length for this would mean my discussing almost all the current problems of our country and the world. I write and speak about these problems often enough. A letter is hardly the place to consider them and I am hard pressed for time.

One thing I should like to point out, however, the sincerity or good faith or ability of a person does not necessarily mean that his policy is good. Only a short-sighted fool would say that people who disagree with him do not act in a *bona fide* and honest manner but when two policies come into conflict, one has to oppose those who hold the opposite opinion, howsoever good they might be individually. Thus in the case of Indian Liberals there is no question of their being estimable persons. The point is whether their policy is good or bad for the country. If it is bad, as I think it is, then it must be opposed. In any democratic country this is taken for granted. The biggest people in any party in England are opposed by members of other parties and nobody objects to this because this becomes the contest of principles and not of personalities. Even so in India we must forget personalities and think in terms of principles.

You seem to separate the three objectives—India's independence, the creation of a socialist state and the solution of the problem of India's poverty and unemployment, and you suggest that the last named should be tackled first. I am afraid this whole conception of our struggle is wrong. If all of us in India devoted ourselves to fighting poverty under the present system—political and economic—we shall not get rid of it. If we could get rid of it then the problem is a simple one and even the need for Swaraj is not very apparent.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

1. A.I.C.C. File No. G-5(a)/1936. pp. 169-171, N.M.M.L.

GLOSSARY

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Chhota hazri | breakfast |
| Halka | a locality |
| Jayanti | birthday celebration |
| Patel | a headman of the ryotwari village in central, western and parts of south India |
| Pracharak | publicist |
| Quami nara | any nationalist slogan |
| Samiti | committee |
| Sarvodaya | a non-political movement for social welfare |
| Sriyut (Syt.) | Sanskrit term used as prefix to name of a man |

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